THE MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

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THE MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE *of* GOD

AN ESSAY IN THE ART OF KNOWING AND LOVING THE DIVINE MAJESTY

BY

DOM S. LOUISMET, O.S.B.

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Third Edition, considerably enlarged

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TO MARY IMMACULATE
MOTHER OF BEAUTIFUL
LOVE THIS LITTLE
TREATISE IS HUMBLY
AND LOVINGLY DEDI-
CATED, TOGETHER WITH
ALL THE OTHER WORKS
OF
THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION

THE *Mystical Knowledge of God* appeared for the first time in 1917 and went through two editions. It contained only the first part of the present volume. The Publishers observed that they seldom had to find fault with a book for being too short, as was decidedly the case with this one. Nevertheless, such as it was, the little volume proved quite a success. But as it was quickly succeeded by other volumes of a larger size, those who wished to possess the entire series of my works on Mysticism, suggested that *The Mystical Knowledge of God* should be enlarged to correspond with the others.

To carry out this suggestion, a second part is now added to the original work which remains otherwise unchanged. This second part is made up of eight hitherto

unpublished Mystical *Elevations on the Lord's Prayer*, and is a sort of practical application of the principles laid down in the eight preceding chapters. Thus, whilst preserving untouched what had pleased so many readers in the first two editions, this is practically a new book. The author sincerely hopes it will prove an acceptable one.

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PART I—THEORETICAL

OF THE NATURE OF MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE

"Our Good Lord showed me that it is full great pleasure to Him, that a silly soul come to Him naked, plainly and homely."
Juliana of Norwich.

The Mystical Knowledge of God

CHAPTER I

On the Knowledge of God in General

KNOWLEDGE—a rational, intelligent knowledge of things—is a mark of man's nobility. Beasts have some kind of knowledge, imperfect and limited, unreasoning and purely material. Man knows himself by his intellect, as also his fellow-men, the world around him, the sciences, the arts, history ; he may even know the "invisible," that which is not apprehended by the senses ; and he may know God Himself, and this last knowledge is the greatest, the most useful, the most necessary of all. It is, in fact, of such fundamental importance that Holy Writ tells us *all men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God* (Wis-

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dom xiii, i). They are vain, i.e., useless, unprofitable alike to themselves and the world ; they are good for nothing, when not positively harmful.

In Heaven we shall know God perfectly. We shall see Him even as He is and face to face, He himself being the Light that will enlighten us ; we shall know even as we are known. It is not so now ; we see Him but imperfectly and dimly as through a veil ; yet, from the very nature of its object, even this imperfect knowledge of God is the most excellent and the most necessary of all. Alas! it is a knowledge which is rare ; few there are that seek it, few desire it or realize its inestimable worth. Men make great efforts to hear of things new and strange and curious, but for the things of God they seem to have no care. It is as though men thought God was of no interest, or the knowledge of Him not worth troubling about. How blind, how foolish, they are ; for is it not self-evident, on the contrary, that God is the most interesting object of knowledge of all ; the most enthralling, the most absorbing?

There are three ways of gaining a certain knowledge of God whilst we are yet on earth: the first is by natural reason; the second, by faith; the third, by love.

The first kind of knowledge of God is called philosophical.

From the consideration of himself and of the universe it is possible for a man, even without the help of supernatural grace, to arrive at the certainty of the existence of God and of the unity and infinite perfection of God, i.e., man is able, by the light of reason, alone and unaided, to assure himself that there is a Supreme Being, that there is but One, that He is full of the most magnificent perfections, a pure Spirit, supremely good, and wise, and happy; free, intelligent, and personal, distinct from and independent of the universe, first cause of all things, holding absolute dominion over all; and that we men, as free agents and His creatures, are responsible to Him for all we do.

Let us suppose, for instance, that a man had never heard of God—a man of clear intellect, blinded by no passions. By applying his mind to the consideration of

himself and the world around him, such a man could arrive at this knowledge of God.

The pagan philosophers of old had this speculative rational knowledge of God, and if they had followed it up they would have attained His sacred Love, for it is of faith that God never denies His grace to those who seek Him. Those pagans, therefore, as St. Paul (Rom. i, 20) says, *are inexcusable*, who, leading evil lives, lost their souls, for they knew God, but, failing to give Him due honour, they were debarred from His grace.

Yet more inexcusable are those men of our own time who refuse to acknowledge the very existence of God. What pagans could find without the light of Christianity, they surely can find now, if they are willing to seek it.

Likewise inexcusable are those who acknowledge the existence of God, and yet refuse to give Him the homage they know to be His due.

The second kind of knowledge of God is by way of faith. It is ministered to us by divine revelation contained in Holy

Scripture, and in the divine Tradition of the Catholic Church. These are summarized for us in the Creed and in the Catechism, and are propounded at greater length in the works of the Fathers and orthodox theologians.

Take, for example, a child who has never seen his father because the man has gone to a distant country. But he writes to his dear son letters full of tender and delicate affection, and little by little informs him of many interesting things about himself. The child in this way, though he has never seen his father, becomes possessed of much knowledge concerning him. In what way? By faith: by believing what his father writes to him. Now, God has done as much for us. Separated in a way from us by the conditions of our present life, God is as though living in a far-away country we call Heaven, and He has written letters to us, and sent us messages. The prophets of old were his messengers to mankind. Occasionally He sent His very Angels, and in the fulness of time He sent His Only Son, clothed in our humanity. The burden of the message of which all these

were the bearers, has been consigned to Holy Writ, or handed down by Divine Tradition. The one and the other are nothing else than letters from God to man, teaching him of things which he could not have found out by the natural powers of his unassisted reason.

Thus we learn about God Himself, first of all, that, though He is One in Essence, He is a Trinity of Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We shall see, later on, that this knowledge gives us an insight into the very life of God.

Then we are made to know explicitly His great works *ad extra*, viz., that He created the visible and invisible world out of nothing. That He made all things for His own glory, and rules them infallibly to this end by His Providence. That He made the Angels, and then man to His own image and likeness. That He tried the Angels, of whom one-third were found wanting and became devils. That He tried man, and that in this trial the whole race fell in Adam (Mary alone, by the foreseen merits of her Son, being preserved), whence it follows that every man

that enters into the world does so with the stain and all the consequences of sin upon his soul.

We are taught that, nevertheless, God so loved mankind as to give His only Son for its ransom ; and how the wonderful love of the Son was manifested in the Incarnation. That fallen man was redeemed by the Cross. That men of good will are sanctified by the Sacraments of the Church. And, finally, that the elect will be glorified in Heaven by the beatific vision, and the reprobate will be damned to the fire of hell, separated from God for all eternity.

Now, all these things could not have come to our knowledge by the light of natural reason alone. It was necessary that they should be revealed to us: they have been so revealed, and it is by faith in this revelation that we come to a higher and a greater knowledge of God. How magnificent, how fatherly, how very near to us does not God appear in the light of revelation! Let us be thankful for the knowledge it has given us, let us try to appreciate it to the full!

But this is not the end: there is yet a

higher knowledge within our grasp: the mystical knowledge of God, the peculiar knowledge we gain by love; by active, conscious and constant love of Him. This is a personal, experimental knowledge of God, which every Christian can obtain by the help of grace, and God does not deny His grace to those that seek it.

He desires to impart the grace of this knowledge to each one of us if we will but let Him.

CHAPTER II

On the Mystical Knowledge of God by Love

WE have seen that there are three ways of gaining a certain knowledge of God while we are yet on earth. The first is by natural reason, the second by faith, the third by love ; and we have seen what is meant by the first two kinds of knowledge of God. Many go no further than this. Through their own negligence and carelessness they never come to this third kind of knowledge of God, by the way of fervent love. This is a thousand pities, for they deprive themselves of a great good, and at the same time refuse to God a satisfaction He has every right to expect. It is this third kind of knowledge of God I will now proceed to describe, so that those who have it not

may be awakened to the desirability, nay to the necessity of acquiring it.

The first and most important thing about the way of the knowledge of God by love is that it is experimental. Experimental knowledge is that attained by seeing, hearing, touching, or in any way soever coming into contact with, or being united to, the object of which we seek to learn, whereby we make certain proof of this object and of its attributes. If a person had never tasted honey, but had been told that it was sweet, and had read a great deal upon the subject of honey, he would have a certain knowledge of it, but not an experimental one. But let him taste the honey, actually put it in his mouth, and allow it to melt there, and feel the sensation of delight it gives him, then only will he know how sweet it is ; he will have proved its sweetness and acquired an experimental knowledge of it. Knowledge of God by the way of love is of the same order. *O taste and see that the Lord is sweet* (Ps. xxxiii, 9).

Let us take another example of experimental knowledge to illustrate our point,

that of the poor Samaritan woman we read about in the Gospel of St. John, with whom Our Lord engaged in conversation at the well of Jacob. She was so struck by what He told her that she ran into the city, as one beside herself, crying out: "*Come and see a man who has told me all I have done. Come and see if He be not the Messiah.*" No doubt the good people marvelled at first at the woman's description of our Lord ; how gentle He was and how saintly He appeared ; how His words had pierced her heart and strangely moved her . . . Then they came to our Lord and saw Him, and spoke to Him and heard Him. They begged Him to come into their city, and He did so, showing Himself to them all, the great Teacher, the great Healer, the great Consoler. He stayed with them two days, and many believed in Him because of His word, and they said to the woman: "*We now believe, not for thy saying; for we ourselves have heard Him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world*" (John iv, 42). Note these words: "We ourselves have heard Him." Here we have experimental know-

ledge. Such is the knowledge of God by love.

Yet another illustration of experimental knowledge. A little child is at his mother's breast, in her arms. Does he know his own mother? Assuredly he knows her. How does he know her? Experimentally. His knowledge is not a rational knowledge, he has not yet the use of reason. Neither is it knowledge by faith or hearsay, for were anyone to tell him this was his mother he would not understand ; but he finds himself in her arms, pressed fondly to her bosom, and he knows. He feels himself loved, and instinctively, in his feeble way, he returns love for love and caress for caress. If he is taken away from her he cries and holds out tiny hands, and will have no peace until he finds himself once more in her arms, for she is all the world to him. Who will say that this child knows not his mother? He could not speak learnedly about her, nor describe her, but he knows that she is sweet ; he has proved it for himself, and he would not change her for the whole world. Now, this again is experimental knowledge, or the

sort of knowledge of God which the fervent soul gains by the way of love.

The loving soul finds herself in the arms and on the warm breast, if I may so speak, of this more than mother, the good God, and she loves to be there. She takes her sole delight in God, and the more she does so the more God presses her to His heart, and secretly manifests Himself to her, giving her to taste and see how sweet He is. That soul may be very illiterate, may not be able to discourse learnedly about God, may be absolutely deficient in philosophical and theological acumen ; but who will say that she does not know God? She has of Him the very best knowledge, the knowledge He Himself gives her personally and immediately. She has been able to make proof of God, and she has found Him very sweet indeed.

Yes, to the soul of good will, who allows God to have His own way, God gives Himself to be known thus by experimental knowledge. He communicates immediately to such a soul the sense of His own sweetness. He is in her mouth as a lump of honey, slowly dissolving into unutter-

able sweetness. He is in the midst of that soul, even as He was in the Samaritan village, all affability, and kindness, and consolation, allowing Himself to be approached and touched with the hands, and familiarly spoken to. He takes the soul, even as the mother takes her child, lovingly into the arms of His affection and feeds her at the breasts of His infinite tenderness.

Now that we know that the knowledge of God by the way of love is experimental, it is easy for us to tell whether we possess it or not. Do you experience at times in the secret of your heart the delightful sweetness of spiritual consolation? Then have no sort of doubt, it is God making Himself known to you. Do you at times feel Him very near indeed, His presence in the midst of your soul, and at such times is He like a loving friend come unto his own, one in whose presence you are very much at ease? And does He bring also with Him a joy that is not of this world? Then have no sort of doubt, it is God giving you to taste and see how sweet He is. Do you experience from time to time the feeling of perfect peace and

security, even in the midst of dryness and internal trials, as of one leaning on the very breast of God? And do you, in this reliance on God, find joy even in the midst of tribulations? Then you have indeed that experimental knowledge of God which comes only by love.

If, on the contrary, we know for certain that God exists, because everybody says so, and our reason tells us it must be so, and if by the same process and the teaching of Holy Writ and of the Church we come by the knowledge of His goodness, but without any personal inward experience of it, then our knowledge is only by way of reason or faith, but not by the way of love. It is not yet all that God would have it to be. God has not yet been able to make Himself known to us, for we are not such as He would have us be, He cannot yet let us taste and see how sweet He is.

But the fault is our own ; we have not loved. Let us begin to love God as He would be loved. Let us now love Him with our whole heart and soul and above all things ; not the world or some idol, or

ourselves instead of Him, but only God Himself. Then He will come to us and manifest Himself and let us taste and see how sweet He is.

CHAPTER III

The Testimony of God Concerning this Knowledge

FROM what has been said it may be inferred that knowledge of God by reason or by faith is an indirect knowledge, from a distance and from without, whilst knowledge of God by love is knowledge at once close, immediate, and from within. It is an infusion of divine light and sweetness and strength, direct from God into the soul, without passing through the channel of outward sign or symbol, such as the Sacred Scriptures, or the Sacraments, or the ministrations of men. Knowledge by reason and faith is good and necessary, but the mystical knowledge of God is still better, giving additional honour to God and bringing more profit to the soul.

The question may be raised: Is such a knowledge of God really given to men on

earth? Does God really give Himself to be known by an intimate secret contact with the loving soul? Or is it all imagination on the part of the mystic, or, as scientists have it, auto-suggestion? Is there no illusion in it?

The answer is easy. We have, on the one hand, the testimony of God in Holy Scripture, repeated, emphatic, and explicit; and, on the other, that of all true lovers of God, the canonized Saints, the Doctors of the Church, and the mystics. They one and all affirm that such knowledge is attainable and obtainable by men on earth, even by every man, as we shall see later.

What is the testimony of God concerning it? Apart from the many beautiful passages of the Old Testament, the Moral Books, the Prophets, and the Canticle of Canticles, let us confine ourselves to what Our Lord says. He is God Himself, the Master of the Mystical Life. He tells us that He does impart such knowledge, and also the conditions necessary for its reception.

Our Lord says (Matt. v, 8) : *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

All the commentators are agreed that the meaning of this passage is not only that the pure in heart may count upon the vision of God in the future life in Heaven, but that they shall, in a manner, see God, even during their pilgrimage upon earth. In what way? Thus: they shall have a perception of God, personal, experimental, of a kind which is denied to those that are not pure. And of him who does not understand this mystical higher knowledge of God, and who is inclined to be sceptical, I would ask: "Friend, is your heart pure? Are you clean in thought and speech, and deed and affection? If not, there is the difficulty. You cannot hope to understand until you are pure in heart." *Animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei* (1 Cor. ii, 14); the poor sinner, the slave of lusts, cannot have any perception of these things. Therefore, let those who desire not only to understand, but to taste and see how sweet the Lord is, become pure in heart. They will then begin to attain to this higher or mystical knowledge of God.

Our Lord says again (John xiv, 21): *If*

a man loveth Me, I will manifest Myself to him. Here it is evident that He speaks of that special manifestation of Himself that comes to a man not by reasoning but by love. It is here no longer a question of that official revelation which He has made to all men through the Church, but of a personal favour done to the soul, of that near and immediate contact by which He gives His faithful servant to taste of His sweetness. The words bear no other interpretation: "I will manifest Myself to him"—i.e., I will show Myself to him in a direct and intimate manner, and this cannot but be very sweet. It is obvious that God should reserve for those who love Him a knowledge of Himself more intimate and precious and delightful than that which is vouchsafed to the sinner. Even the most perverse sinner may have a purely speculative knowledge of God, such as is supplied by study of philosophy and theology.

In another place (Luke x, 21), Our Lord says: *I give Thee thanks, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and pru-*

dent and hast revealed them to little ones. Here He informs us that there are things which God is pleased to reveal to little ones—i.e., to all those who by humility become little in their own estimation, whilst He keeps that very particular knowledge back from those who are proud of their learning or natural powers. Now, what are the things thus revealed? What is that knowledge of God which is denied to the philosopher and even to the learned theologian, if he be not a little child in humility? It cannot be any other than the higher knowledge, the immediate, personal, experimental knowledge of God, giving Himself to be tasted by the loving, humble, child-like soul.

Many more texts of the Gospel and the Apocalypse could be brought forward, all as forceful and explicit as those we have just quoted, to show that the experimental knowledge of God is no pious fiction, no invention of over-zealous, illusioned devotees.

Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein (Mark x, 15).

How does the little child receive the Gospel from the lips of its mother, or the good Sisters or the Priest? With the greatest simplicity and an utmost implicit trust. He does not reason about it, or find fault with it, or take this and reject that. No; if we were to go to our children's class at Catechism time, we should see how the child receives the truths told to him. There is no modernism there. Is it folly on the part of the child? Far from it. With the grace of his baptism still fresh upon him, and his natural innocence helping, he gives a genuine, rational, earnest assent to all that is told him. Moreover he draws his conclusions strictly. A child would be amazed were he told not to love God, or only to love Him a little. A child is uncompromising in his reception of the Kingdom of God. There was a time when we were such ourselves, many years ago. Little children, we received the Kingdom of God in simplicity, and we desired to love our Master with our whole heart. Alas! we have grown indeed, but in worldly wisdom, and the unquestioning and undivided love we vowed to God

when we were little has been scattered to the winds. We found it would cost us a great effort, and a lifelong one, to love God as we should, to keep on loving Him as children do, so we compromised the matter. We no longer receive and retain the Kingdom of God, the Gospel teaching, "as a little child," and so we cannot penetrate therein. This Kingdom of God on earth, which is the mystical life, the knowledge of God by love, the enjoyment of Him and the marvellous sanctification of the soul consequent thereto, are denied us, because the conditions necessary to their acquirement are lacking in us. *Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein.*

The First Commandment is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* Jesus did not say, "Thou shalt understand the Lord thy God, or thou shalt be learned about Him," only, "Thou shalt love." And He tells us how to do this. *With thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind, with thy whole strength.* Thus only may we hope to gain the mystical knowledge

of God, to taste and see how sweet the Lord is. The invitation, or rather command, is not to a few, not to a select class or to His Apostles only, but to all men. All are invited, but oh! how few, how very few come to the feast!

We have seen that this special experimental knowledge of God, with its wonderful sweetness, is given to souls of good will. We know also the conditions necessary for attaining it. They are purity of heart, humility, and holy simplicity, virtues attendant on the true love of God.

Beyond this there is no greater or higher knowledge, excepting that vouchsafed the blessed in heaven, in the beatific vision.

CHAPTER IV

No Possibility of Delusion in the Mystical Knowledge of God by Love

WHEN we say that God makes Himself known in a special manner to the loving soul, that He manifests Himself to the mystic, people are apt to imagine this to mean that God shows Himself to the mystic in visions and revelations. Or, again, they confuse this inward secret manifestation which God makes to the soul with the well-known phenomenon of sensible or sentimental devotion. Now we must well understand that the experimental knowledge of God by love is neither a kind of miraculous apparition nor the suspicious sweetness of sensible devotion, and it is subject to no possible delusion.

Sensible fervour may come almost to anyone, saint or sinner, and from a variety

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of causes—even such as have hardly anything to do with the love of God. It may come occasionally to a tepid or negligent Christian upon witnessing some unusual display of religious pomp and ceremony, or on hearing a fine voice, or music beautifully rendered. This is but a shallow, passing impression on the surface of the soul, or, rather, in the region of the senses and imagination. Nevertheless it is a grace of God in its way, and the Christian will do well to heed it, and make it the starting-point of a more fervent life. If he fail to do so, there is a danger that this brief period of sensible fervour be followed by a depressing sense of loneliness and desolation, and a temptation to abandon the whole enterprise of the spiritual life. From this it is plain that a fit of sensible fervour is not a manifestation of God Himself, made by Him directly into the soul. Therefore this must not be taken for the mystical knowledge of God, which, as we have said, is just such a manifestation of God, by God, directly into the soul. Nor does it consist in visions, revelations, and ecstasies such as certain saints have been favoured

with ; nor, again, in a miraculous and definite setting before the eyes of the mystic of some form or image of the Divine essence.

In this matter of visions and revelations, delusions are easy. Visions may come from God or they may not. We read in Holy Scripture that the devil has power to change himself, seemingly, into an angel of light, and to work upon the senses and imagination and thus deceive even the saints.

Saint Simeon Stylites, after he had been many years on his column, was visited by a cherub driving a fiery chariot, who told him that God had need of him in paradise. Simeon was about to mount the fiery chariot, but before doing so he was inspired to make the sign of the Cross, whereupon the whole thing vanished away. It had been nothing but a snare of the evil spirit.

Hundreds of examples might be cited to show that visions and revelations, seemingly the most trustworthy, may be nothing but the work of the spirit of darkness, and most dangerous delusions. This is why all spiritual writers warn us that

visions, ecstasies, and revelations may never be desired or prayed for, and that when they come unbidden they must be received with the greatest diffidence and must not be reckoned on for our spiritual guidance without the advice of a most prudent and spiritually enlightened director.

Now, the mystical or higher knowledge of God does not consist in these things. Far from being a kind of vision, all the saints are agreed that it is a blind apprehension or blind perception of God. Such is their doctrine, particularly that expounded by St. John of the Cross, who is no small authority on the subject.

What is meant by a blind perception? We will take, for example, a blind man. He gropes his way about in a perpetual darkness, but does he not hear if spoken to? Does he not feel if objects or persons close at hand come into contact with him? Does he not taste the sweetness of food and drink when given to him? And does he not rejoice at the beneficent warmth of the sun in summer, or of a fire in winter, though he be never so blind? His, then, is what we may call a blind perception.

This is precisely what takes place in a spiritual way in the mystical knowledge of God ; this is the sort of apprehension of God which the loving soul experiences. Though he does not see God's countenance —for that is given to the blessed in Heaven alone—the mystic nevertheless hears His loving voice in the secret of his heart ; he feels the warm embrace of God around him ; from time to time he tastes inwardly the sweetness of His consolations; and at all times, even in darkness and tribulation, he feels the strength of God's mighty arm supporting him.

Now, there can be no illusion in this, precisely because it is a blind apprehension of God, and the senses and the imagination have no part in it. It takes place in the most secret part of the soul, where the Evil one can have no access to work his wiles. If it were a vision it might be an hallucination of the brain, the work of the prince of darkness ; but here there is no image, no representation of any figure or form, no speech heard of the ear. The author of the *Imitation of Christ* is emphatic in insisting that God makes Him-

self heard to the faithful soul without noise of words (Book i, ch. 3 ; Book iii, ch. 2). There is no delusion, nor possibility of delusion, in the mystical knowledge of God.

Is the mystic always able accurately to account for his new knowledge of God? No ; even he is not always conscious of it. He certainly could not put it into words, and he does not care to do so ; he does not care to speak of it. He keeps his secret, or rather the secret of the King, well. He loves : that is enough for him.

This blind perception of God, or God known to the mystic by a blind perception, is what spiritual writers call " the Divine Cloud " or the " Dark Night," " la Grande Ténèbre," because of the total absence of all images or figures and the failure of creatures to help therein. The naked soul is alone with God. The universe of things visible and invisible is banished, and ultimately the consciousness, even of self, becomes for the time being obliterated.

Thus, at times of mental prayer, the soul, not seeing its God, and yet having

lost sight of creatures, is engulfed in a very great darkness. This darkness is God Himself, the very substance of God. A palpable darkness, but not in the earthly sense of the expression. A luminous darkness, dazzling to the eyes of the soul, as the light of day is darkness dazzling to the eyes of the bat or the owl. A wholesome, warm, delectable, desirable darkness, brighter infinitely than the brightest day of creatures, be it even that of the intellect as such. And there can be no illusion in it, no going astray or losing oneself in it, except in the blessed sense indicated by our Lord. *He that shall lose his soul shall find it* (Matt. x, 39).

We shall have more to tell of this darkness as we proceed. Suffice it now to say that he who begins fervently to love, just steps into the Divine Cloud, and he who makes progress in fervent love goes deeper into it ; and he who is perfect in fervent love goes deepest into it. On the contrary, he who has not yet begun fervently to love God, has not begun truly to know Him ; he has not come to the edge of the Divine Cloud. This is, alas! how matters stand

with many souls. It is late in the day. *Novissima hora est* (1 John ii, 18). Let us begin at once. Let us love God without any fear whatever of the consequences. Let us love God and never fear that such a love will be to us a snare and a delusion. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?* (Ps. xxvi, 1.)

CHAPTER V

What it Really Means

"That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, that you may be filled with the fulness of God."
Eph. iii, 18, 19.

DO the saints during their pilgrimage on earth, or even those in heaven who see God face to face, comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of God? Do they receive the fulness of Him in themselves? In a way they do, or else the Apostle would not pray that it be granted to his beloved Ephesians; and yet when we consider that God is a Spirit, and therefore has no dimensions, no breadth and length, no height and depth—that being infinite He cannot be held within the limits of any created capacity—we are warned to look for a

spiritual, mysterious meaning to these words. For this reason let us consider what is really meant by enlarging our mystical knowledge of God.

Human language is a poor instrument when used for the purpose of expressing the mysteries of God. It is clumsy, and treacherous, and wholly inadequate, but as it is all we have, we must perforce make use of it, being mindful to do so cautiously, and to qualify, if need be, the meaning of our words.

Here, for instance, we speak of enlarging our knowledge of God. Now, there is no such thing as enlarging our knowledge of God. Why then do we use the expression at all? For want of a better one. It conveys our meaning, and yet at the same time it perverts and betrays it. It brings with it a notion that does not fit the nature of God and of our knowledge of Him. Yet as we have no better word for our meaning, this one must serve.

The mystic's knowledge of God is not enlarged as knowledge of other things is enlarged. If, for instance, we speak of enlarging our knowledge of English, we

mean more words, more rules of grammar, more construction and analysis of phrase and sentence. Of history, more names of great men, dates of great events, of battles, revolutions, and treaties of peace, etc. Of astronomy, more knowledge of the laws that govern the stars and constellations. To extend one's knowledge in these matters means a multiplicity of notions, an extension in surface, a reaching out to more things. Not so an increase in the knowledge of God. This does not gain in surface, nor does it make for multiplicity of notions, but, on the contrary, for simplicity and unity.

This seems subtle and difficult to understand, but it is a most beautiful truth. To enlarge one's knowledge of God, more especially the mystical knowledge of God, does not mean to know more things about God, but to know the one thing, God, more. This is done in a manner void of images and creatures, by a simple, intense, and disengaged apprehension of God, Who is absolutely, infinitely pure and simple ; of Him Who has said : *I am Who am* (Exod. iii, 14).

Dionysius, the Areopagite, who is considered the greatest authority on mystical theology, speaks of the double process by which the human mind seeks to form a true notion of God, namely, the affirmative process and the negative process. By the former we consider all the things of the universe in their beauty and goodness, and we say: "God is this, but in an infinite degree." Thus God is life, light, beauty, power, but in an infinite degree. By the latter we deny that God is anything we can see, or comprehend or conceive. This latter, Dionysius maintains, brings us nearer to the truth, for it leaves us only with a simple apprehension of God, and is more worthy of His infinite majesty. It is here—that is to say, at the acknowledgment, conscious or unconscious, of God's incomprehensibility—that the soul enters into what St. Denys calls the Divine Cloud or Darkness, for now, indeed, the human mind is dazzled by the brightness of the splendour of God's truth, and is enveloped in darkness. Blessed is this darkness, and it were far better here to grope in blind and loving faith than to

bask in the brightest light of human reasoning.

The same doctrine is set forth by St. Thomas in Tractate LX. He represents to us the loving soul athirst after God, drinking at all the fountains of created knowledge, and saying to each one that she drinks from: "No, ah, no! You are not that which I am seeking for. You cannot refresh me! The light of the sun and of the stars, and the beauty of nature: no, you are not my God! The greatness and the power of the elements: no, you are not my God! The loveliness of man, woman or child: you are not my God!" The Saint goes on through all the things that, in the order of creation, might satisfy the soul, but is obliged to confess that nothing, either here below or in heaven above, can bring happiness or give a true idea of what God is, save only God Himself.

But the soul that is in ignorance, the worldly soul, what does she say? To gold and silver and the things of earth, she says: "You are my gods. I love you. You reign supreme in all my thoughts. I

delight in you. Surely you will give me happiness." Like the Hebrews of old at the foot of Mount Sinai before the golden calf. *These are thy gods, O Israel!* (Exod. xxxii, 4). So does the sinner say to the creatures of flesh and blood, formed of the slime of the earth, things of a day, that will rot on the morrow: "These are my gods! Would that I might enjoy them here, on this earth, for ever!" It is thus, alas! that the devil interposes himself in God's place, and is worshipped as God. Did he not say to our Divine Lord Himself: *All these* (the pleasures and honours of this world) *will I give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me* (Matt. iv, 9).

Comparatively few there are who answer with Our Lord, "*The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.*" To the false gods of the world which can never satisfy, how many there are who sacrifice everything: talent, honour, health, time, fortune, body and soul, and even the souls of others dependent on them. Does not treason such as this, if unrepented, throw a lurid light on the reality of hell fire?

But to return to the consideration of the knowledge of God, and of enlarging it by the increase in depth and intensity of the perception of God.

When St. Paul prays that we may be made able to comprehend, with the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, and that we may be filled with the fulness of God, he means two things: the illumination of the mind in regard to Divine mysteries, especially the mystery of the Divine Essence, and a greater fulness of the effects of the presence of God in the secret part of the soul. Indeed, at each new act of Divine contemplation, one's notion of God becomes more simple, more ineffable, nearer to the mode of perception of the pure spirits, that is to say, of the angels and souls that are separate from their bodies.

The spiritual experiences of a soul wholly abandoned to God succeed each other with an astounding variety and number.

In the life of Bl. Angela of Foligno, what strikes one particularly is, how each manifestation of God is so marvellous to

her, that it throws in the shade or blots out entirely all those that preceded it. The Saint is at a loss to express her admiration of this effect of God's love. Something similar to this takes place in the mystic soul. It is as though God presented one aspect of His Divine Goodness to her and then withdrew it, saying, "Not this, it is not this," and then another aspect, and withdrew it also, saying again, "Nay, not this, it is not this."

At every fresh mystical experience the perception of God becomes clearer, more evident, more sweet, more penetrating, and yet less and less demonstrable, just because it is so intimate! It works its way through unknown paths into the depths of inner consciousness, and nothing is able to shake the assurance of the soul that God is there, and that she touches Him, and is being acted upon by Him in a way that is altogether different from that previous to her entrance into the mystic life. Now, this is the way the mystical knowledge of God can be said to become enlarged.

In reality, what takes place is this: God is working that precious material, the

mystic soul, which has become plastic and passive in His hands. He is scooping it out, pressing it from inside, and, as it were, extending its walls and boundaries.

First, He empties it of self and all things else, and makes it absolutely clean, and then He makes it larger and larger, and takes possession of it, filling it with His own fulness. By each fresh spiritual experience, the soul grows more and more capable of tasting how sweet her Lord is. By each Divine touch she is made more pure, more refined, more akin to God, more able to enjoy Him. At the same time she becomes more trustful, familiar, and childlike in her dealings with her Beloved. The soul has now become more dead to self and the world, and more responsive to the least touch of the Holy Spirit. That is what is really meant by enlarging one's mystical knowledge of God.

CHAPTER VI

How We Fail to Enlarge our Mystical Knowledge

"I will arise and go to my Father."
Luke xv, 18.

HOW does it happen that the mystical knowledge that comes by love remains, for the greater number of Christians, but rudimentary and undeveloped? How is it that we have so little of that "intimate, conscious, constant union with God" which is the outcome of true love, and which constitutes the mystic life? Whose fault is it? God's or our own? Has God perchance failed to make advances to us and to show us the way? I emphatically answer, No! The good God has made loving advances to us, for there is not one of us who has not tasted, at some time or other, that God is sweet. It may have been when we made our first

Communion, either on the day itself or after. At other times, again and again, God has allured us by making us feel the joy of being near Him, and conversing with Him heart to heart. Who has not had such spiritual experiences? and, after all, when we look back upon our past life, are they not the happiest? Even Napoleon I, it is said, at the height of his glory, confessed to his astonished generals, that the happiest memory of all his eventful life, was that of the day of his First Communion.

In reality, then, we have all had a taste and a beginning of the higher knowledge of God, the mystical, experimental knowledge, communicated directly into the soul by God Himself. A taste and a beginning, but nothing more. Why is this?

Because we have not kept up the loving intercourse with God to which we were invited. We are to blame; the fault is ours.

If we wish to know a person intimately, we are not satisfied with merely becoming acquainted with that person; we seek to keep up our intercourse with him. Having

met a man for the first time and had a little conversation with him, and taken stock of him, we are said to have struck up an acquaintance. Should we meet the man the next day, we should recognize him immediately and be recognized by him, and quite naturally resume our intercourse. No more preliminaries would be needed, no fresh introductions necessary. But if, after having met a man once, and spoken with him, for some reason or other we do not wish to meet him again, if he should avoid us and we him ; if, for instance, when passing in the street, we turn away from one another, and have nothing to do with one another, then our first acquaintance cannot be said to develop. The memory of it will fade away into the distant past.

Later, perhaps, if the man is mentioned to us, we may remember him, but the memory will bring with it nothing but displeasure, as though this person had injured us ; or is it that we feel we were not all we might have been to him?

But if, after our first meeting, we try to meet him again, and again, and again, and

each time converse as long as we can and with the greatest familiarity, and do all in our power to cultivate his friendship and to please him ; and if, on his part, he lays himself out to be known and loved by us, and shows himself to us without restraint, or disguise ; if he opens his heart to us, and has no secret from us, then indeed our acquaintance can be said to have developed into a very real friendship. And should the man be good, the more we see of him the more we shall like him, and the more he sees we appreciate him, so much the more will he love us in return. Thus, mutual affection will increase and grow in tenderness and strength, and its effect for good will influence our whole life.

If this be the case with poor human love and friendship, what may we not hope of the Divine? The more we endeavour to come near to God, speaking with Him in the secret of our heart, the more He will make Himself known to us, and, on the other hand, the more appreciative we are of His Divine goodness and the more we strive to cultivate His friendship, so much the more will He love us in return. Then

will He unfold to us the treasures of His Heart. Then shall we be permitted to feel the marvellous charms of His sacred Humanity, and the infinite sweetness of His Divinity. As that great lover of God, St. Augustine, says, " God makes Himself to be our honey, and makes us to be His honey." His honey, His delight! And has not God Himself said: *My delights are to be with the children of men?* (Prov. viii, 31). In the Canticle of Canticles, the Heavenly Bridegroom speaks these words to the loving soul: *I am come into my garden, O my sister and spouse. . . . I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved* (Cant. v, 1). The honey is the soul in which He takes His delight, the honeycomb is the body in which that soul is lodged, as honey in the comb ; for the body itself, the flesh and the senses, become affected by the love of God, and, so to say, consumed thereby. The wine which Jesus drinks with the milk typifies the burning charity and sinlessness of the loving soul ; and He calls upon His Di-

vine Father and the Holy Ghost, and the blessed Angels and Saints to partake of His joy, as is seen by the words: "Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, O my beloved."

This is the interpretation given by St. Bernard and other Fathers of this passage in the most mystical book of Holy Writ, and from it we may gather to what honour is raised the soul who follows up her first acquaintance with God and Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We now know why it is that our mystical knowledge of God has remained undeveloped and has borne no fruit. Through no fault on the part of God was it arrested in its beginnings. Loving intercourse by means of mental prayer has not been kept up. We may be in a state of grace, receive the Sacraments and say customary prayers; we have not opened to Him the floodgates of our soul, nor allowed all our affections to flow forth impetuously unto Him, to receive in return the inflowing of His loving tenderness: no wonder we remain in dryness and far from God!

Let us go a step further and ask: Why

did we not keep up and develop our first acquaintance with God, by love? Now, it is not always out of indifference or levity that a soul of good-will is arrested on her way to God. Sometimes it is through a lamentable mistake, because what concerns the mystical life is not known or understood. Hence it happens that after the first visitings of God to the soul, the reaction which inevitably follows, plunging the soul into dryness and darkness, surprises her, and causes her to be tempted to abandon the whole enterprise of the spiritual life. She is inclined to think she has made a mistake in aiming so high, and is not called to the ways of the life of love. This season of spiritual darkness, after all, is as natural and as much in order in the spiritual life as day and night, summer and winter, in the physical life of the world. Therefore should there be someone at hand, to tell this soul of good will that all is well, and there is no mistake, and that she has only to persevere strenuously in her enterprise: God in His own good time will show her the light again, and revisit her with His consolation.

But again it happens, and this, alas! more often, that the soul has indeed rejoiced at the sweetness of her first meeting with God in the secret of her heart, but that she is not disposed to make the necessary efforts required to keep up this loving intercourse. Mercenary, selfish, ungenerous soul, who would turn her back on God the moment He ceases to pour out upon her His sweetness and consolation. Such a soul as this loves God only for what she can get from Him and so long as He gives her gifts, and not a minute longer. What God gives she loves, but not God for Himself. A very, very low standard of spiritual life this, and perhaps, if we look well into it, we shall find it to be our own. Small wonder, then, if we go no further than the rudimentary stage in the mystical knowledge of God.

What then is to be done? Change completely our way of acting. Seek out God, and call upon Him, and strive to be ever mindful of His presence. Let us, as often as we can, enter into the secret chamber of our heart and, there, speak with Him and listen to Him; let us enter resolutely upon

the way of love. There need be no fear that the good God will hold aloof from us. A man whom we had so neglected after he had made advances to us, desiring to live with us on terms of friendship, might behave thus. He might reproach us, saying: "What! you, to come to me after all you have done?" He might throw the past in our face and turn his back upon us with every show of contempt. A man, yes, but the good God, never! Though in the past we have neglected Him, we need not now mistrust Him. We may go back to Him, and we shall find that, sooner or later, He will welcome us, and lavish on us His treasures. The story of the Prodigal Son does not apply to great sinners only, but also to tepid and negligent Christians, who have turned away from the loving embrace of their Heavenly Father in the mystical life, and squandered a fortune of time and grace and opportunities of becoming saints. They have eaten the husks of the swine, which are their vain desires and self-love, and they are spiritually starving and in rags. Let them say with the prodigal: "*I will arise*

and I will go to my Father, never to leave Him again, never more to stop my loving intercourse with Him."

CHAPTER VII

How It May Be Done

"The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth to perfect day."—Prov. iv, 18.

THE first way in which we can gain a greater mystical knowledge of God is, of course, by direct intercourse with Him in the secret of our heart. This is done by keeping up the loving intercourse with Him as long as possible, as long as our necessary occupations will allow, as long as our fervour lasts and we feel drawn to it. It is not wise at times of spiritual fervour to turn away from God to talk to creatures ; to say, "My half-hour of meditation is over, I will now stop this loving intercourse with God." No ; if possible, if there be nothing to hinder, it ought to be kept up, even as we go to and fro on our different duties in the day,

as long as God is pleased to draw us to Him and give us to taste and see how sweet He is. No measure of time, neither day nor night, ought to restrain us from the loving embrace of the good God. Nothing, therefore, except the Will of God Himself, made manifest by the call of duty, obedience, or charity, should stay the outflowing of the soul in love and the inflowing of the love of God into the soul. He that is being entertained at the table of the King, will he turn away to revel with menials and mendicants? He who finds a great treasure of golden coins and precious stones and has but to gather them in, will he waste his time in picking up pebbles and brass buttons? Will the thirsty man who has come upon a fountain of pure fresh water, turn aside to drink out of a puddle a few drops of stagnant, poisoned water?

And when at last this most sweet, direct intercourse with the Beloved comes to an end, as it will from time to time in our present condition, let us be eager to renew it, watching and being ready to seize upon the first occasion, the first motion of grace.

ST. ALBERT

But even when we are quite willing and eager to keep up the loving intercourse with God in the secret of our heart, there are times when, try as we may, we are unable to come into touch with the Beloved. We know He is there, in our heart (He is always there), we try to speak with Him, but we fail to get any response. A season of spiritual dryness has set in and this may last a very long time. The good God does not show us His loving countenance, nor let us hear His voice, as of yore, nor does He fill us with the sweetness which so delighted us. What are we to do?

We must love Him as much in dryness as in refreshment, and humbly bless Him. Let us say with holy Job: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away . . . blessed be the name of the Lord* (Job i, 21), and then bravely pursue our efforts at advancing in the knowledge of God. For this purpose we may turn to the Holy Scriptures.

As one deprived of the loved presence of a friend reads and re-reads his letters, and dwells fondly upon passages he had not noticed at first or had lost sight of, and thus

enlarges his knowledge of the absent friend, so, *by patience, and the consolation of the Scriptures* (Rom. xv, 4), by piously and thoughtfully reading and re-reading the Gospels and the other parts of the Bible, we shall enlarge our mystical knowledge of God.

But we must read, not for the sake of mere human learning, nor out of curiosity, but for love alone. Such reading ought to be undertaken at all times and by everyone, no matter in what sphere of life he may be called to labour. If we read the Scriptures with the eager desire of gaining some golden particles of the mystical knowledge of God, we shall assuredly find therein treasures of untold value. For, there, God has portrayed Himself in human language, making use of our modes of thought and expression ; out of love, He has thus accommodated Himself to our small capacity, as a fond parent stoops down to a little babe and stammers and babbles with it in a childish way.

Our past experiences in the mystical life, our previous loving intercourse with God, will throw an intense light upon texts of

Holy Writ which otherwise would have failed to arrest our attention. The very words of God will now enlighten us as to His dealings with our soul, and enable us to understand His ways.

This is one way in which we may enlarge our mystical knowledge of God, at times when we are unable to do so by direct intercourse.

There is yet another way.

We want to know more about God? Let us go to the creatures of the earth whom He has fashioned, and who can speak of Him. Let us seek Him in creation ; let us lovingly contemplate Him in the magnificence of the universe: the sun by day, the stars by night, the earth and the sea, all life and motion, light, joy, beauty, all these are His witnesses! *The Heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands* (Ps. xviii, 2). The birds sing of his loving kindness. The tiniest flower of the field, more gorgeously arrayed than Solomon in all his glory, tells of the tender providence of the Father in Heaven. The very stones have a voice and proclaim

Him, and, in listening and being attentive to these million voices of nature, our knowledge and our love of the good God will grow in depth and intensity. A saint used to stroke the flowers gently with his staff, and say: "Ah, hold your peace, you chide me, you cry out the excess of the love of God!" Then there are those who speak of Him in our own language, and tell us about Him, because they have known Him: I mean His intimate friends, the saints. In times of dryness, let us read what the saints have written about God, and let us also read the lives of the saints. Let us, in preference to all others, choose those writers whose names the Holy Church has prefixed with the letters St. or B., "Saint" or "Blessed." They are the graduates of the spiritual life; they have their certificates, their parchments, so to speak, their degrees well authenticated; they have been proved and found worthy. Because they have experienced the life of which they write, they speak of it with an accent of truth, simplicity and authority to which mere scholarship could never attain.

St. John, in his first Epistle, says: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the word of life . . . we declare unto you* (1 John i, 1-3). These same words the saints and holy writers may justly use in a sense but slightly different. And studying their lives we see how in all things, without ceasing, they applied themselves to God—how their souls were poured out in loving intercourse with Him, and how He met them in a loving embrace. And in this way again we become conversant with the ways of God and understand His divine operations.

CHAPTER VIII

"The Last Word About It All"

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS in his youth was insistently asking of his teachers the one question: "What is God? What is He in Himself? In His true self?" To this question human reason ever seeks to give some sort of an answer, but after a good deal of stammering, it is obliged to confess: "I do not know. I have not seen God in Himself, but only His reflection dimly mirrored in His works. I cannot conceive what He is in Himself, much less express Him in words of human speech." Even the assertions of reason, that God is the first Cause, the Creator of heaven and earth, or that He is a pure Spirit, do not tell us what manner of being He is. The devil, for that matter is a pure spirit.

We turn to Faith, Christian Faith, and

we ask her to tell us what God is in Himself, and Faith has an answer ready: "God is the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons in One Divine Essence"; and Faith is sure that hers is the right answer, for God Himself has dictated it. But, for all that, Faith does not comprehend what she professes. This is a mystery, the very greatest of mysteries. Faith does but repeat the words she has learnt, with the docility of a child repeating a lesson, but she is like the child who often does not fully understand what he repeats. So that even Faith cannot give a satisfying answer to our question, "What is God?"

Now, love will try his turn. He, of all others, is eager to know what God is. He pushes rapidly beyond all the things of this world, visible and invisible, for he knows they cannot tell him. He hears and hearkens to the answer of Faith, but he is not satisfied. He pushes forward, boldly and blindly, for he cannot see his object, but he will find his answer; it will offer itself to him. When God sees a soul in quest of Him, He meets her, ah! more

than half-way. *Seek and you shall find.* Love meets his object. He grapples with it in the darkness of this mortal life, and he forces its secret out: "Tell me, what art Thou?" The answer comes straight from God Himself, not by words of human speech, but by a burning impression of His own Divine substance upon the substance of the soul, wherein He gives her to know what He is. *God is Love*, GOD IS LOVE ITSELF.

The answer has been given. The soul, like Jacob wrestling with the angel, has been bold enough to ask: "*By what name art Thou called?*" And she has received an answer sharper than a two-edged sword. The poor, loving soul is wounded by the Divine touch. From now on she feels she will never be able to go through life with the same assured step as before. She will halt and reel as one in pain or as a drunken person, and in truth she is both drunken and in pain—drunken with the delight, the perfume, the substantial joy of knowing God to be love itself; groaning and in pain at the weight of the mighty revelation. The stricken soul can say but

one thing: God is Love, *Deus charitas est!* and the world thinks this person must be mad. Have not all the saints, one after another, passed in the eyes of the world for madmen, and their Master before them?

But, you may say, we know this. We have in 1 John iv, 16, *God is love.* Macaulay would say the merest schoolboy knows this. Where is the difference between our knowledge and that of the mystic? The difference is this. "God is Love" is an article of abstract faith for the mere theologian; for the mystic, it is a living fact. A living fact, glowing and resplendent as the sun in heaven. A fact which he feels in himself, in his own soul and body, with as much personal, experimental knowledge as we have of the sun above our heads on a midsummer day.

Yes, we may read in Holy Writ the words, "God is Love," and repeat them, and give a learned demonstration of them, and all the while they may be to us nothing more than the statement of a truth which makes no impression on us. It is a light of a kind, subdued and cold, as that of the distant stars. But these same words that

leave the philosopher or the theologian cold and loveless, negligent and mayhap in mortal sin, will set the true servant of God all aglow and on fire.

A frigid observer, himself perishing of cold, might be able to analyze and describe accurately how it is that the property of fire is to burn. The charcoal in the fire cannot describe anything, yet it does better, it burns. It shows the process in its very self, even causing to flame up and burn what comes into contact with it. So it is with the mystic. He may be unable to put his perception of God into words, to define it, or reason it out. But he apprehends so vividly, by actual contact, that God is love, that he is himself set all on fire with love. This knowledge seems, as it were, to transform the mystic into the very substance of the love of God.

The greatest proof of the reality and non-delusion of the knowledge of God by love is that it calls out, in the mystic soul, love in its highest degree. The whole conduct of the saint or mystic (for we must remember that the true mystic is a saint) proclaims the truth that God is love, just

as the behaviour of the charcoal thrown into the flames proclaims the fact that fire is a burning and consuming element. The hatred of the loving soul for self, her indifference to all the world, except in direct reference to the love of God, her turning away from creatures and her complete abandonment to God, her loving attention to the presence of God and joy in the thought of Him, show forth that she has indeed a vivid, vital apprehension of God under this, His most enthralling aspect—Love.

All this takes place in the mystic, in the saint, in the true servant of God, whether he be literate or illiterate. Whatever his natural endowments or limitations, the mystic is made to feel, by immediate contact, that God is love, all love, nothing but love, love in three Divine Persons. He is made to realize experimentally that this infinite ocean of love is pressing all around his heart, to break into it and make it divinely happy. For him, God is a burning sun of love, in the warm light of which the whole world of angels and men, and all inferior creatures, animate and inani-

mate, are basking, whether they know it or not, as the small gnats and atoms dancing in the rays of the sun.

He knows that God is substantial love, the only love worthy of the heart of man or angel, the only one capable of filling the great yawning void in his heart and its immense desire and capacity for loving and being loved.

All this, whether the mystic be literate or illiterate.

But if he be a learned man, inclined, or, rather, moved by the Holy Spirit, to write on the subject, then the world is the gainer. Then shall we have such works as the *Confessions and Soliloquies* of St. Augustine, St. Bernard's *Sermons on the Canticles*, *The Third Book of the Imitation of Christ*, *The Living Flame of Love* of St. John of the Cross, *The Treatise on the Love of God*, by St. Francis of Sales, to name but a few. The mystic of learning and genius is made to see, and is able to show as no one else, the love of God, in all the pages of Holy Writ, in all the mysteries of religion, in all the events of history, in all the circum-

stances of his own life and that of others, precisely because the very love that God is in Himself is burning bright in the centre of his soul, illuminating it and all things else for him.

Here, then, is our question answered. This is the last word about God—final in time and eternity: GOD IS LOVE. If we say: "God is Good, God is Life, God is Light"; if we say: "God is the Creator of heaven and earth, He is our Father in heaven, He gave us His Only Son, He pours out His Holy Spirit upon all flesh," we mean only God is Love. And when we shall have come to the Beatific Vision in heaven we shall perceive that to be the ineffable Trinity, to be the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a law of the substantial love of God. Then at last we shall indeed be set on fire with the love of God, and for all eternity.

EPILOGUE

OF THIS FIRST PART.

AS my readers who have had the patience to follow me thus far have no doubt realized, my aim in these pages has been wholly to fire souls with the love of God and with longing for that special knowledge of God which comes through love alone.

However awkwardly I may have acquitted myself of the task, I hope I shall not be considered presumptuous, if I make my own, on behalf of my readers, the beautiful prayer of St. Paul for his beloved Ephesians (Eph. iii, 14-20).

"*I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom all paternity on earth and in heaven is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man; that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that being rooted and founded in*

charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth: to know also the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge: that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

And finally, dear reader, shall we not add also with the same Apostle: "*Now to Him Who is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus unto all generations, world without end. Amen.*"

PART II—PRACTICAL

MYSTICAL ELEVATIONS ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Thus therefore shall you pray."
Mat. vi, 9.

ELEVATION I

The Greatest of all Prayers

THE greatest of all prayers is the "Our Father." The Sovereign Master of Mystical Theology gave it to us. With a truly parental love He taught us to repeat it—thus framing the first syllables of our speech with God—just as a mother teaches her child to lisp its first words. Thus therefore shall you pray: *Our Father who art in heaven.*

Had He not already declared we must *become as little children*? No one can say the "Our Father" well, and fail to become a man of prayer; no one can *enter the Kingdom* of Mystical Theology unless, by humility both of mind and heart, he become *as a little child*. Our Father who art in heaven, Word of God made flesh and ever present in Thy blessed Sacrament, dear Holy Spirit of the heavenly Father

and of Our Lord, Spirit of love who deignest to dwell within us as in Thy temple ; most beloved Trinity, one God: *Hallowed be thy name.*

But, O good God, what joy for us to be allowed to call Thee " Our Father."

" *Our Father,*" that is Father of Jesus and of me; Father of all; for in Thee, Heavenly Father, angels and men are brothers; in Thee, Father of infinite mercy and *God of all consolation,* sinners and saints are brothers, the only outcasts from Thy love being the wretched inhabitants of hell, because they have wrenched themselves from Thy family for ever.

The "Our Father" is the grand anthem of the Universal Church. In the Divine Office an anthem is recited or sung both before and after every psalm. At times, merely a part of it is read at the beginning, to be completed at the end of the psalm. In the olden days, in the Synagogue, some anthems were repeated after each verse. Now that we are reciting our psalm of the present life with the " Our Father " for an anthem, let us repeat this anthem after each verse, never growing tired of it, and

only ceasing when the present sorrows are ended and we are able to join our voices to the great chorus of the angels and the saints and repeat our anthem for the last time at the very foot of the throne of our Heavenly Father.

What do we need? What is required of us? Just this and no more: the seven petitions of the "Our Father." Nothing is requisite but the fulfilment of this divine programme.

First of all: *Hallowed be thy name.*

May the holy name of God be known and loved and praised. "*Father*," said Our Lord, "*I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world*" (John xvii, 6).

What else is wanted? The establish- of the Kingdom of God. This handful of followers—twelve apostles, seventy-two disciples whom Our Lord had gathered around him—was not enough. This small band of the faithful spread over the world, widely dispersed, lost, one may almost say, in the great mass of men composed of infidels, idolators, heretics, worldly-minded

and sinners; such a small band is not enough. God wishes all men to be saved. He wishes all to come to the knowledge and the love of His Divine Goodness. He wishes to rule, to reign supreme over all created minds and wills as is His sovereign right. Oh that this indeed might come to pass! *Thy Kingdom come!*

We should expend all our energies in endeavouring to bring this about. This must be the aim of our whole existence, of all our undertakings, of all our actions. It is the aim of the blessed angels as we learn from the next petition: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*

And what avails anything on earth except to do the will of God? What else is to be done? The will of man? When God is not the aim of our volitions they tend to nothing. And besides the will of God and the will of man, what other alternative is there? The will of Satan. Now what is the will of Satan? That we should become like him, rebels against God, outcasts, accursed. Oh! may that never come to pass. Father, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the will of God,*

your sanctification (1 Thess. iv, 3): for your future glory and beatitude.

Is anything further needed? No. And yet there are other petitions that follow that all sufficing one; yes, but they are merely variations of the same theme, very interesting and very sweet, because they concern us intimately and tell us plainly and in detail what God's will is in our behalf, what we really need and what He is willing to grant us.

What then is it that we need?

In the first place we must not be solicitous about anything but the present. "*This day*," so that each day we are made sensible of our dependence upon God and humbly ask for what we need. Our desires must be moderate and we must persevere in prayer; a double lesson taught us by that single word "this day." And now what need we to-day? Bread first of all. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

We ask not for health or plenty or a long life on earth, or for honours and success here below. We ask not for luxurious living, for the fat of the land, for luscious fruit or sweetmeats. We ask only what

the beggar asks for at the rich man's door: a piece of bread. He certainly wishes and hopes for more, but bread is all he asks for.

Bread before everything else. God allows us to think of the needs of our bodies and of our souls, and of satisfying these our needs even before we recall the bitter memories of our sins; but this we must also daily do. Every day we must renew our sorrow for having offended so good a God, and we must not entirely forget those sins which have been mercifully forgiven us. Without a special revelation no one knows whether he is deserving of love or hatred. Hence it is necessary that we should continually repeat with ever-increasing earnestness the petition, *Forgive us our trespasses.*

Now as we are all brothers, being children of the same heavenly Father, and members every one of the same family, brotherly love, harmony and goodwill should continually reign amongst us. That is why Our Lord would have us express the condition on which we may hope for forgiveness of our sins. It is this, that we also forgive our brethren whatever

wrong they may have done us. *Forgive and you shall be forgiven.* Accordingly we say: Father, *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.*

From the melancholy remembrance of our past sins we turn our eyes to the future. Timidly we ask ourselves whether, in the face of temptation, we have not learnt our own weakness. Oh these temptations, these ambuscades, these surprise attacks and violent assaults of the enemy, from whatever quarter they come, whether from the devil, or from the world, or, worst of all, from ourselves. Good God! what dangers threaten me on every side! I tremble at the very thought of them. Shall I save my soul, even after the sins of my past life have been forgiven? The danger is not yet over. The army of the Spirit of Darkness is all around me, watchful foes ever on the look out for me. O God, be with me! Heavenly Father, leave me not to myself a single instant.

The wonderful Psalms of David, asking so insistently for the Lord's help, form an appropriate commentary on this petition,

Lead us not into temptation. At the same time, this petition is to us a revelation of what the crowning gift of Our Saviour is to be: namely, that He deliver us from evil. Death is a deliverance, saving us from the evils of the present life. Final perseverance is a deliverance, saving us from the danger of losing the grace of God. Heaven is a deliverance, at one stroke saving us for ever from all our miseries.

But there is yet more in this short, modest, almost negative petition. There is the entire oblation of His sweet Self that God makes to the souls of the Blessed. *I shall be thy reward exceeding great*, said He to Abraham. Are not all the joys of eternal life contained in this promise?

But why did not Our Lord set it down in more explicit terms? Possibly because He wanted to give us the joy of finding out His meaning for ourselves. Oh! my soul, what joy when at last we find ourselves in Paradise! *The snare is broken and we are set free* (Ps. cxxiii, 7). Free from the burden of the flesh and the tyranny of the senses. Free from contact

with the enemies of God. Free from the stain of sin and from every debt to the Justice of God. Free from fear, illusion, weakness. Free for evermore! And instead of constant miseries, bliss eternal; instead of a glimmering hope, an assured possession, and instead of an impalpable presence, the entrancing embrace of our Heavenly Father surrounded by our elders, the glory-crowned family of Saints and Angels whose joy is enhanced by our being eternally saved.

Deliver us, then, from evil; and give us all good, dear Heavenly Father. Didst Thou not say to one of Thy servants: "Come thou to Me and I shall give thee all good in giving Myself to thee." O Father, behold I come. Let nothing on earth hinder me from Thee. Amen.

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ELEVATION II

The "Our Father" of a Loving Soul

O LOVE, O God, O Trinity: love in three divine persons, *hallowed be thy name*. Thine be the praise, and the power, and the glory!

O Love, *thy Kingdom come*. What can I desire more than that Thou shouldst conquer and rule and reign supreme? At present, here on earth, coldness, indifference, black ingratitude, overwhelming selfishness, dissensions, mutual contempt and hatred hold sway. If only these horrors could be replaced by the delights of the Kingdom of God, what a paradise would this world be!

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The will of love is to love and be loved, and what is there sweeter than this? To

love and be loved means to allow myself to be loved of God as God wills to love me ; to allow Him to take full possession of me, and in return for this actively and fervently to correspond with Him. On my part I must flee from all that may sunder me from Him. He loves me tenderly, and in return I must love Him with my whole heart.

O God of Love, *give us this day our daily bread.*

The bread of love is love itself. Love bestows no other bread upon its children. This divine bread is given to us in divers ways. The word of God spoken or written brings it to us. So also do the Sacraments and Grace under all its forms, but more especially the Holy Eucharist. O dear Lord, give us always this bread and grant that we may always receive it with heartfelt reverence and tender love.

O God of Love, *forgive us our trespasses.*

" Be it so," He replies, " only let it be on the condition dictated by love." One

of the dearest functions of love is to forgive. Our Lord tells us that He will freely forgive us, if we on our part forgive them who trespass against us. By this He shows Himself to be Incarnate Love. O God of love, I understand Thy law of love and my soul desires it. For Thy dear love's sake, from my heart I forgive all who have trespassed against me, without a single exception and without the least reserve. So as not to place myself outside the confines of Divine Love, I put no one beyond the pale of my poor human love. The devils and the damned are the only ones excepted, because they have placed themselves outside the confines of all love, Divine or human, for ever.

O God of Love, *lead us not into temptation.*

Let not Thy children fall again into sin, which is the betrayal, the negation of love.

O God of Love, *deliver us from evil.*

What is evil in the eyes of love? Is suffering evil, and should we ask to be delivered from it? No, suffering is not evil;

on the contrary, it may be turned into the greatest blessing. There is moreover the pain of love itself from whose violence I pray not to be delivered in this world.

From what evil then do we beg to be delivered in this world? From tepidity or falling off from the fervent heat of love. O God of Love, deliver us from this evil. O God of Love, penetrate our hearts more and more with love of Thee. Let Thy love so completely take possession of us that it raise us at last on wings of fire to Heaven. There we shall plunge and be engulfed and lose ourselves in that furnace of love which Thou art, O God, O blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

ELEVATION III

The "Our Father" and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

OUR *Father*, the Triune God, *who art in heaven.*

Hallowed be thy name, by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Our Saviour, together with all that we are, united to Him by the closest bonds of love.

Thy Kingdom come through the virtue of the Divine Sacrifice and of the frequent loving Communion of all the faithful in the reception of the Body and Blood of our dear Lord.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, by the union of all the faithful among themselves and with their Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and their submission with Him unto death, even if need be unto the

death of the Cross. But are we not too weak to accomplish this ourselves? We cannot do it without help from on high. *Give us* then, O Heavenly Father, *our daily bread*; I mean the Body and Blood of Thy beloved Son in Holy Communion.

Forgive us our trespasses, by the merits and through the intercession of thy dear Son on Calvary and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and during the long, silent, seemingly solitary hours of His real presence under the sacramental species in the tabernacle. O Heavenly Father, look not upon my sins, but *look upon the face of Thy Christ;* listen to His pleadings from the Cross, from our altars: *Father, forgive them.*

"Most willingly will I forgive," replies the merciful God. "To do so for the love of my divine Son is the desire of my heart; but you must bear in mind and faithfully execute the condition upon which this forgiveness is promised. *Forgive and you shall be forgiven; remit and it shall be remitted unto you.*"

But, O my God, it is hard for us to reach so high a degree of perfection; it is

exceedingly difficult for us weak creatures, slaves of our impressions, to forgive an insult, to love an enemy. How can I overcome this feeling of resentment, this long-standing antipathy verging on the confines of hatred?

"My child, you must ask for the powerful help of my grace. It alone can give thee strength for such heroic efforts. Yes, I say heroic; for that is the word that best describes them. Then look upon thy Saviour. He is God, yet He allows Himself to be dreadfully ill-treated and tortured during His sacred Passion. Hear Him praying for His enemies, for His own murderers. Think of Him in the Blessed Sacrament, so ill-used, neglected and insulted, yet ever ready to forgive and to love. He never shows any sign of resentment, never rejects anyone who comes to Him, not even when it is for sacrilegious communion, not even after years and years of indignity and outrage."

My God, how true this is! My Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, Thou hast conquered; I cannot resist such an example of meekness. I also, with the help of Thy

grace and in order to liken myself to Thee, resolve henceforth to forgive my enemies, to love them, to pray for them and do them all the good I can.

Lead us not into temptation.

Let us not be tempted beyond our strength, but turn Thou our temptations to our greatest advantage. By the virtue of the Most Holy Eucharist may our enemies be confounded and dispersed.

> O saving Victim, opening wide
> The gates of Heaven to man below;
> The foes rush in on every side,
> Thy aid supply, Thy help bestow.

Deliver us from evil.

From what evil especially? Jesus, in Thy most Holy Sacrament, deliver us from the evil of indifference and irreverence towards Thee ; from the evil of negligence before, during and after Mass ; from the evil of no preparation before and insufficient thanksgivings after Holy Communion; from the evil of deriving no benefit for ourselves and for the world at large from all the graces that gush forth from Thy wounds and from Thy loving Heart,

O Jesus, and that flow in streams throughout the Church of the living and of the dead. Amen.

ELEVATION IV

Deliver us from Evil

FROM what evil? From that which is the manifold consequence of sin, whether in ourselves or in others, and which by a vicious circle is leading us back into sin.

From the evil of tepidity; from whatever prevents our advancement along the road of love ; from all that stands in the way of mental prayer. From discords and misunderstandings with our Superiors and our brethren. From the many imperfections which spoil our very acts of charity.

Ignorance, blindness of our mind, weakness of our will, the sting of the flesh, our defects of character, our vices hereditary or self-acquired: these are so many consequences of sin and great evils which we deplore and from which we beg to be delivered.

We beg also to be delivered from the society of the wicked and from the sight of the scandals of the world, even when these are no cause of temptation to us, because they are nevertheless a cause of acute suffering to those who love God.

Finally, deliver us, O Lord, from the snares and assaults of the evil spirit, especially as we have already given him so much power over us.

By this prayer, "*Deliver us from evil*," we confess that even after our sins are forgiven, we cannot of ourselves wipe out their consequences. To do this an all-powerful hand is needed. It is a divine work ; it is the crown of all the graces for which we have already asked. After it there is nothing but Heaven.

How shall we be delivered?

Either by expiating our faults or having them forgiven. By illness and suffering and other divine chastisements on earth. By death and purgatory and the decay of the body in the tomb. By the violent and unnatural state of separation of the soul from the body. We beg, first of all, that we may bear these punishments aright as

they are allotted to us by the infinite Justice of God, and then that we may be finally delivered from them. We even ask for the resurrection of the body, because only when this is accomplished shall we be delivered from the final consequence of sin, namely, the separation of our soul from the body which is its own.

Thus by this humble and very brief petition, though we seem to ask for less than Heaven, which we do not expressly mention ; as a matter of fact, we ask for more than the bliss of Heaven as the blessed enjoy it at present. For even after a human soul has reached Heaven, there remains a great wrong to be set right, the wrong of our nature which demands to be replaced in its primal integrity, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. We wish to be in heaven in soul and body together, so that the last trace of the indignation of our Heavenly Father against us may be completely removed. We ask that which the souls of the Blessed do not as yet possess ; we ask it for them and for ourselves, "*Deliver us from evil.*"

But what a great and noble petition! and

how we should love to repeat it over and over again with sighs and tears and heart-felt devotion!

ELEVATION V

The "Our Father" of the Mystic

NONE but an adept in Mystical Theology can realize the depths of the meaning of the Lord's Prayer or grasp with mind and heart the vast extent of its petitions.

Our Father.

The Mystic understands how God is his Father and how he himself is the child of God not only by creation but in a loftier sense by supernatural adoption.

He perceives in himself a close likeness of the filiation of the Divine Word and how he ought to show forth God and more deeply receive His divine impress till, if we may so speak, the parental features be faithfully reproduced in the child. He must allow the infinite Being to fill to overflowing the small capacity of his tiny self and

to express Himself therein in whatever way His infinite wisdom may choose: thus in a measure transforming His creature into another Divine Word.

What a wonderful self-renunciation this mighty transformation involves. We say nothing of the renunciation of all other created things, these being already to the mystic as things that are not. What an absolute divesting of self! In what a state of emptiness and perfect simplicity or nudity of soul does he not realize that he must place himself if he desire to show himself the worthy son of such a Father! How he realizes the imperious necessity of constantly turning towards God as the sunflower towards the sun, of drawing nigh to God, of wrestling with Him like Jacob till he sees Him like Israel. Then the divine essence seems to flow freely and diffuse itself within him and the soul is engulfed and lost, as it were, in the ocean of the Divinity, yet without confusion of personalities. All else in that soul is consumed by the ardours of the Godhead and replaced by the flames of the Divine Essence.

Thy Kingdom come.

We should not speak of the Kingdom of God unless the King of Glory, our Heavenly Father, had subjects over whom he could display the exercise of his power and of his magnificence, that is unless there were angels and men. But how will the Kingdom of God come first among the angels and afterwards among men, except in the way that He Himself has decided upon from all eternity, namely, through the mediation of His Word made flesh, of His Divine Son, born of the Virgin Mary, *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*, as the whole sacred liturgy never tires of repeating?

Here the mystic loses himself in deep adoration of the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ in His two natures. The mystic joins himself in spirit to the faithful Angels, to the Patriarchs and Prophets of old and to the People of God and to Mary before the revelation of the great mystery to her and its accomplishment in her very self ; he joins himself, I say, to all these and with them implores the coming of the Messiah. Then joyfully opening the eyes

of his soul to the historical fact of the Son of God having come in the fulness of time, and of His having been seen in the flesh *full of grace and of truth*, and of His dwelling still among us under the veil of the sacramental species, the mystic desires and prays for, and strains every nerve to procure, His Eucharistic reign, and, by means of the Church, His social reign. Finally he prays for His coming on the last day, *with infinite power and majesty to judge the living and the dead*, to triumph over all His enemies, and at last to inaugurate that Kingdom of His of which we sing that *there will be no end*. All this our mystic includes in his petition *Thy Kingdom come*.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What is the will of God as it is in God, but His love, that other Self, His Holy Spirit? So, after the coming of the Divine Word we beg for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Carried beyond himself with burning desires our mystic prays that the Holy Spirit of Love may be sent down from

heaven, diffused into the world, in the Church, in his own heart, and dwell there in spite of his limited receptive capacity as fully as He is in God Himself.

So, in the three first petitions of the Lord's Prayer the mystic rapturously adores the Blessed Trinity and the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord. He adores, enfolding them, so to speak, in one and the same act of love, God the Father, Our Lord His Divine Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one divine essence.

Next to the mystery of the so marvellously fruitful divine unity, our mystic perceives the mystery of the unity of the Church, that is to say, of the union in Jesus Christ of all the members of the Church and consequently of their community of interests, since they unite together all their prayers and merits. This is made evident to him in these words: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

And not only is it the case with the just here below that they have all their spiritual goods in common, but there is inter-communion moreover between all the just of

the Church Militant, all the holy souls of the Church Suffering, and all the dear saints of the Church Triumphant. Of this the mystic is well aware. Hence, just as he begs for himself and for the companions of his exile, the bread of the wayfarers, so also does he at the same time pray for the souls in Purgatory, that they may be given at last the bread of the beatific vision. He even prays in the same breath, for the continuance of the heavenly banquet of the blessed in heaven. Not that he thinks there is any danger or possibility that the bliss of the Saints in heaven should come to an end, but it is an act of brotherly love on his part to demand it of God for them, at the same time as he rejoices in the sure knowledge of its absolute indefectibility.

Give us this day.

Why does he limit the scope and extent of his petition to this day only? Ah! it is because he is in great hopes that this very day is to be the last of his exile, and that to-morrow, yes, not later than to-morrow, he will be in his Fatherland. "I

would die of sorrow," said one such mystic, "if I knew that I was not to die today."

The mystic says moreover with St. Paul: *I die daily*. Why should a dead man take thought of the morrow? *You are dead*, says again the Apostle, *and your life is hid in God with Christ* (Col. iii, 3). This day, my God, only this day, do I pray for the bread which Thou hast never failed to give us, thy hungry little ones.

But again, what sort of bread do we need and pray for? To such divine beings as we have been transformed into by Holy Baptism and Confirmation, a divine bread is necessary: the bread of the word of God in Holy Scriptures, the living bread of the flesh of the Lord and the bread of the manifold grace of the Holy Spirit. God the Father draws it out of His own substance, to feed the children of His love. He gives them His Only Son veiled under the sacred species, and His Holy Spirit, invisible also. A truly divine bread and identical with that with which the blessed angels and saints are fed in glory; there is this difference only: that for them every

veil is removed whilst we do not as yet enjoy the consolation of seeing the glory we feed upon.

We are working in the dark, and we are partaking of a divine food which is not seen with the eyes, and our waxing strong and our growing up *to the fulness of Christ* takes place in secret. Thus we are walking in the paths of obscure faith, until it shall please the Lord to show us His blessed countenance in glory. Then *shall we know even as we are known* and shall appear like unto Him. *Similes ei erimus.* This indeed will be a marvellous event.

It is clear that the further advance our mystic makes in the Lord's Prayer the more he grows in the boldness of his requests. In the first petitions he was imploring the coming of the Divine Word and of the Holy Spirit, Their coming down from heaven, Their advent here on earth, Their public manifestation, Their active intervention in human events ; but now he will not be satisfied until They are given to him personally. The mystic must needs be granted at once the gift of

two out of the three Divine Persons ; he wants to have them as his very own possessions and objects of enjoyment, pending the time not far distant when the Father will also give Himself in heaven to the mystic as the supreme reward of his saintly life on earth. Then will he enjoy as his own personal possession the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the whole Blessed Trinity, in the essential, beatific vision. *Ego sum . . . merces tua magna nimis* (Exod. xv, 1). *Reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo* (Job xix, 27). *Ita Pater quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te* (Matt. xi, 26). Yes, O my Lord, such is my wonderful hope. Oh! my sweet, beloved God, most Holy Trinity, Thou wilt give Thyself unreservedly to us in Paradise ; meanwhile, O Heavenly Father, give us Thy Divine Son and Thy Holy Spirit, feed us with such divine bread. *Give us this day our supersubstantial bread* (Matt. vi, 11).

But I want to receive that bread worthily. To this end I must be quite pure. Therefore I earnestly pray: *Forgive us our trespasses.*

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Ah, those sins which he has had the misfortune to commit, be they grievous or perhaps only venial, be they numerous or be they few, our mystic can never cease to feel the bitterness of their remembrance and never thinks himself sufficiently cleansed from them.

What tears! How many macerations! The heart-breaking sorrow! And he realizes that these things are of no avail except the blood of Jesus is mingled with them, and holy absolution supervenes; unless the very flames of the Holy Spirit burn his soul and the Heavenly Father, out of the treasure of His mercies, grant forgiveness. Therefore the mystic exclaims: *Wash me more and more, O Lord, from my iniquities. O Father, I am sorry I have sinned against heaven and before Thee: I am not worthy to be called Thy son. I am Thy servant,* Thy bond-man, Thy miserable slave, Thy insolvent debtor. Put me in chains, strike me, trample me under foot, do with me whatever Thou pleasest, but grant me pardon. Is there anything I can do that will incline Thee to be merciful to me?

God answers forthwith: "Yes, indeed, there is something thou canst do, this, namely: thou canst forgive thy brother his trespasses against thee, thereby securing to thyself My good will and letting loose upon thy head the cataracts of My mercies."

Amen, dear Heavenly Father. I accept the condition, and I confess that Thou art in very truth and in every way *the Father of mercies*. I shall forgive. From my heart I do forgive all those who have offended me. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

Who would believe that the mystic is in fear and trembling for his final perseverance? It is a pathetic sight to witness the apprehensions of that saintly man in regard to his eternal salvation: he, so highly favoured by the good God, he, the spoilt child, so to speak, of Divine Love, he that lives only for God, that feeds upon God, that inhales and breathes out the aroma, the sweet perfume of God! But he is quite right. It is his humble fear as

well as his ardent love that will save him. Our mystic is a wary mountain-climber. On the Yungfraw or on the mountain tops of God's infinite sanctity and the white altitudes and eternal glaciers of His dazzling perfections, he knows he is skirting deep abysses.

He must watch over his every movement ; the least false step might hurl him headlong to the bottom of a precipice. Although his head is already in the Divine Cloud, his feet are still treading the earth. He might stumble or slip or miss his footing. Climbers, to all appearances better than himself, have come to grief. There have been frightful catastrophes since the fall of Lucifer and Adam and Judas the Apostle. How, then, could such a wretch as the mystic considers himself to be, flatter himself that he will not follow them in their frightful fall, were he unfortunate enough to separate himself from God for the space of a single moment? He that thinks himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall: *Qui stat caveat ne cadat.* O Lord, lead us not into temptation! O Lord stay by me, strengthen me, guide my

steps, and at the same time be my buckler against the burning arrows aimed at me on all sides by my enemies. Do not let me meet with temptation beyond my strength to overcome, as would infallibly be the case if Thou shouldest withdraw Thy help. Indeed, to fall from such a lofty height, to hurl oneself down from the sublime altitude of the mystical life into the abyss of sin, and thence to rebound and be precipitated into the deepest hell, could any more horrible fate be imagined? Oh! save me, my God, preserve me from such a misfortune: *lead us not into temptation.*

But deliver us from evil.

Let there be neither at present nor ever hereafter during the remainder of my poor life and throughout all eternity, anything in common between me and the Evil One. Deliver me from him; snatch me from his horrible clutches, abolish his rights over me, break his bonds, smash all his snares. Grant me the grace of a saintly life crowned with a holy death. Ah! then indeed I shall be well delivered for evermore from this accursed Satan. I shall be safe when

I find myself in the dear embraces of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Oh! that this may come to pass at last! *Deliver us from evil.*

Thus it is that the mystic finds all things in the Lord's Prayer. Therein he finds God in Himself, in His intimate life and operations and in His works *ad extra;* God as Creator omnipotent and as Man and Redeemer of a fallen race, and as Sanctifier. He finds also therein his own life in God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Church and His blessed sacrament of the Holy Eucharist ; as also he finds therein the sweet bond of brotherly charity, the Communion of Saints, and the present condition of the Church as *Militant;* and finally the eternal retribution either of damnation in hell from which he entreats to be saved, or of bliss and glory in heaven, after which he longs with his whole heart and soul.

Such then is the Lord's Prayer of the Mystic.

After the mystic has thus found out, with the help of divine grace, the hidden mean-

ing of the Lord's Prayer, and reduced in his own mind the whole divine revelation to a synthesis truly marvellous in its simplicity and unity, there remains just one more step for him to advance. Even higher up than all these splendid views on the subject of God, of all things in God and of himself in God, there remains for him blindly to plunge himself at last into the great luminous darkness, into the immense, deep and dark Cloud that is God in His own naturally impenetrable and inaccessible essence. Then barred from any further progress, for indeed it is impossible to a created being, yet a wayfarer here below, to advance further, our mystic comes to a standstill. He is happy beyond all that human language could express: happy and dumbfounded as well as struck blind. Until then he might have thought himself favoured with divine illuminations, and persuaded himself he knew something of God. But now no more. He is dazzled, stunned, dazed in this divine darkness; he feels himself an absolute ignorant, an IDIOTA, and he is happy!

ELEVATION VI

The "Our Father" of the "Idiota"

WHAT do we mean by the Idiota whose prayer we are attempting to set down?

Do we mean the poor, harmless, almost demented creature whom thoughtless children bait and tease and who is an object of pity to their elders?

Well, why not? Do we want to forbid such a one, ignorant and incapable of learning though he be, to raise his eyes to Heaven and to speak to the Father of all, who loves him just as much as He loves the man in possession of all his faculties? Do we want to forbid his kissing the hand of the Father to whom he owes his daily bread, as though this were a privilege reserved for the learned? On the contrary; observation goes to show that too often the man of learning is not a man of prayer and rudely turns his back upon his Hea-

venly Father. He is so taken up with self-glorification that he has no adoration left for God.

Or shall we take it that the Idiota is merely the mystic groping in the Divine Darkness and owning that he knows nothing and can say nothing? So be it, if you wish. Having reached this point in the spiritual life, our mystic readily admits that there is little difference between him and the man whom the world contemptuously styles an idiot; between his knowledge and the ignorance of the mentally deficient; or even no difference at all, looking at it from the point of view of the infinite. For God infinitely surpasses both the idiot and the intellectual; nay, from the point of view of the infinite, even a cherub or a seraph might make use of the language and take upon himself the bearing of the mentally deficient. Our mystic prides himself upon his close resemblance to the idiot, making his sublime folly an act of adoration of the Divine Majesty.

This then is the "Our Father" of the Idiota.

Our Father who art in heaven.

My Lord, my God, my Heavenly Father, I am a child who scarcely knows how to speak. I open my mouth and stammer a few incoherent words, a canticle in which there is no melody, no beauty, sung in a tuneless voice. *A! a! a! Domine Deus; ecce nescio loqui quia puer ego sum* (Jer. i, 6).

Our Father! Father of Jesus and my Father; Father of the Incarnate Word and of the poor Idiota!

Hallowed be thy name.

Thou callest Thyself God, but I hardly know what that word means; I have no idea what Thou art like, I can form in my mind no concept or shadow of an idea of Thee.

It is useless to attempt it: I have to give it up. I can only just repeat Thy name so full of mysteries, God, God, my God—and I go repeating this over and over again, even though without understanding it. Father, my God, invisible, incomprehensible, unapproachable, hidden in the Dark Cloud, in the deep fulminating, infinite

Light which Thou art in Thyself, but which our bat-like eyes cannot bear to look upon: I adore Thee, I love Thee: *hallowed be thy name*, O God, my God, my beloved Father!

Thy Kingdom come.

My Heavenly Father, be Thou King upon this earth of ours! Mayest Thou reign over all hearts and especially over mine. Oh! that I could only see Thy magnificence unfolding itself! It would console me for my own absolute misery and nothingness. That I could hear Thy courtiers, the Blessed Angels and Saints in heaven, and also Thy angels on earth, the just, all celebrating Thy praises in their wonderful canticles! Then, Idiota as I am, I would laugh boisterously for joy; I would laugh and weep at the same time. I would dance as did King David before the Ark of the Covenant, and I would call out: "The King of kings, my Heavenly Father! Long live God! May He rule and govern and gloriously reign, and take pity on the lowly ones. May He bow Himself down even to me who am the least of all. May He

raise me from my dunghill and cleanse me and cover me with rich robes and precious jewels and make me sit at His own table among the princes of His court!"

These are the extravagant, exorbitant requests of the leprous, poverty-stricken person that I am. This, O my God, my Heavenly Father, is the meaning I attach to the petition, *Thy Kingdom come!*

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I am an idiot and I know nothing: I can only obey. Tell me to rise and I get up, to sit down again and I do so, to wallow in the dust of my own nothingness and I obey. Tell me to lift a burden and place it on my shoulders and carry it in the sweat of my brow; to turn to the right, or to the left, or march straight on, and I shall obey. I do not understand why Thou orderest me thus; I am *a beast of burden*, O my God, but I do not mind it, so long as it pleases Thee. Place, if Thou wishest it, a bit between my teeth, and a yoke upon my shoulders and urge me forward with a goad. Do with Thy poor servant what

thou willest ; make me do Thy bidding whatever it be: *Thy will be done.* In obedience our Idiota is at one with the sublimest Seraph, nay, with the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and with the Lord Jesus, the Only Son of God: he is doing God's holy will ; he is doing it on earth *as* they do it *in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

The poor Idiota, who does not remember the past and for whom the future is a sealed book, can only be anxious for the present, for to-day. He needs bread ; he knows where he can get it. He will go to the Rich Man's door, to *the Father of the family*, the Tri-Une God, and there he will voice his petition ; and every day he will repeat it. This may not be considered a very intelligent proceeding, but what more can you expect from an idiot? He has no inclination to let himself die of hunger sooner than beg, as some who pride themselves on their intellect would have him do. No, no. The Idiota needs his pittance, and as he knows where to find it, he will secure it by asking loudly for it.

He does not know much, but this, at least, he does know.

Our daily bread.

The bread of this lowly one is the Divine Eucharist, where Jesus is so hidden and so small that nothing is to be seen either of His humanity or of His divinity. The Idiota opens his mouth, receives the divine gift and eagerly takes it to his heart. He is told that it is God and he believes it implicitly. "But it is God made man whom you receive; the man Jesus Christ, God at the same time, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who lived thirty-three years on earth and who died on the Cross." That he believes with all his heart. "A man risen again, living, glorified, divine, the very same Son of God who reigns at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, clad and crowned with all His splendour. He it is, O poor Idiota, who comes to feed you with Himself." And the simple-minded one is not even astonished; he believes unquestioningly, he fervently adores, he loves with his whole heart. He receives his *daily bread* and is happy, and his only

desire is to eat this bread always. "*Give us this day our daily bread!*"

The poor Idiota will never start a heresy; he will never have a private interpretation of the Word of God, nor any singular opinion of his own upon the revealed truths of God. He will never make a selection among the truths taught us by the Catholic Church, admit one dogma and reject another, or interpret a third in such a way that it loses all sense and leaves the words meaningless. His faith is simple, pure, unassailable and perfectly consistent; no one could find a flaw in its logical sequence any more than one could shatter the faith of a child who, seated on its mother's knee, believes everything she tells him. The bread he asks for includes thus the teaching of the Church, the doctrine of truth.

Forgive us our trespasses.

I am a poor idiot, ignorant and bad. I have offended my Heavenly Father. I have said, thought and done all manner of foolishness and horrors: alas! but what else could be expected from a creature like

me? I ought to be publicly whipped, and imprisoned. Everything should be taken away from me. I deserve to be forgotten, to be for ever banished from the light of heaven, the society of the blessed angels and of the saints and even of men on earth. Alas! I deserve more than this. I deserve the fires of hell, the society of the demons and to be for ever cast away from Thy beloved presence. Now will such terrible punishments be meted out to me? I still may cry out Pardon! Pardon, then, oh my God ; I will beg without ceasing for pardon, till Thou and Thy Saints, wearied of my importunity, tell me to be still, and that all is forgotten.

For, Thou seest, O my God, my dear Heavenly Father, that as an ape copies the acts of a man, and as a child tries to walk in the footsteps of his elder brother, so do I try to imitate the acts of my Saviour Jesus, sweet Jesus. For love of Thee I forgive those who have trespassed against me, those who have thrown stones at me, who have called me names ; and I beg of Thee to have pity on my misery, upon them, and on all poor sinners and upon the

holy souls in Purgatory. Yes, Father in heaven, *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.*

And lead us not into temptation.

O Heavenly Father, I fear temptation. It is what has done me so much harm in the past, what has made me fall into sin. Temptation is what would purchase for me eternal damnation. And yet I hear Thee say temptation is a necessity. I cannot understand this, but I believe it because Thou tellest me it is so. Thou sayest it is the only way to prove whether I love Thee more than all, more than pleasure. What does not necessarily follow upon temptation is that I should fall into sin. Now in order to resist successfully and to come out of this ordeal victorious, what must the poor idiot do? For a poor simple-minded one as I am to triumph over Lucifer, to emulate the bright Archangel, Saint Michael, what ought he to do? Simply this: he must pray. This is not beyond the capacities of an idiot. He can pray with his whole heart and strength. He can go on repeating:

Lead us not into temptation. This I will now do without ceasing.

But deliver us from evil.

The greatest evil is he that is called the Evil One, that is to say, Satan, that rebellious spirit, that monster of ingratitude and hideousness! Oh! good God, how the devil terrifies me. I do not want to fall into his clutches, to be held in leash by him and led hither and thither. I do not want to be forced to do his bidding. I want to have nothing to do with him. *Go behind me, Satan*, thou the great accursed one, thou most infamous wretch. I am only an idiot and thou art an angel, but all thy native brightness has now, through thine own fault, turned to pitch black darkness. I know thou wishest with incredible malice to do me all the harm that is possible, but I adjure thee by the sacred and all-powerful name of Jesus to leave me alone. Never again wilt thou find anything of thine in my soul. Ah! what is it thou mutterest? Thou wilt not leave me? thou hopest to vanquish me in my last agony? I throw myself under the

protection of Her who has crushed thy head, Mary, the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God ; I throw myself on the mercy of Him who has conquered thee for ever, Jesus, sweet Jesus, my Lord and Saviour! O my God, deliver me from evil ; save me from the Evil One, from this accursed *fallen cherub* (Ezech. xxviii, 14). When he was created Thou gavest him every wonderful gift, natural and supernatural, but through insane pride he has lost all the supernatural ones and turned all the natural ones, which are still so great, to the purposes of malice and wickedness. He has lost the most precious gift of love. He hates Thee, his Creator. I am nothing but a poor idiot, I understand nothing, but I want to love. Oh! give me the grace to love Thee, my God. Already I do love Thy goodness, Thine infinite gentleness and sweetness. Already I am beginning to love my brethren and to feel compassion on their sufferings. That I may come at last to love Thee and them perfectly, eternally, deliver me from the Evil One, deliver me from all evil.

Amen.

Everything is included in this simple word of two short syllables. It is the Idiot's chosen prayer. Without straining his mind he can repeat it hundreds and thousands of times from morning until night, and during the night if he awakes.

To all the good thoughts that cross his mind, to all the impulses of love that spring up in his heart, he answers *Amen.*

To every good deed he hears mentioned, to every work of mercy, spiritual or corporal, to every act of justice or of charity, joyfully he answers *Amen.*

When he is told that the just on earth bless God in hymns and canticles, he rejoices and says *Amen.* When told that all creation sends up a perpetual hymn of praise to the Maker of all, the dear Idiot says *Amen.* He knows that the rhythmical beatings of his heart and the mutual action and reaction of his soul upon his body, and of his body upon his soul, give harmonious praise to God who made us with such wondrous skill and so much love, and to all this he says *Amen.*

He is told that the Church on earth praises God most sweetly and melodiously in the sacred Liturgy all around the most Holy Sacrifice of Mass, and though he does not very well understand, the poor dear says fervently *Amen*. He hears that the suffering souls in purgatory are continually sending forth to heaven cries of the most ardent, most pure love, he weeps in sympathy for their great sufferings, and sobs out *Amen*. He knows that the Church Triumphant of the blessed Angels and dear Saints in heaven ring out on their instruments of music and with full chorus of voices, glorious hosannas around the throne of the Lamb of God, sweet Jesus ; the idiot shouts *Amen*, and longs to be there, in his true fatherland, and to join his voice with those of all the blessed *children of light* and love.

He knows that out of all the Saints of Paradise only the Virgins and Innocents are privileged to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and to sing an entrancingly beautiful hymn that the other saints love to hear but cannot repeat, and to this canticle of the unstained ones the idiot murmurs

a sweet *Amen ;* and his secret hope is to be one of them soon.

He is told that Mary thrills the whole Heavenly Jerusalem with the strains of her *Magnificat*, and joyfully he sings out *Amen.* That Jesus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus with his whole Sacred Humanity, raises the most beautiful hymn of praise to the Divine Majesty, and he answers *Amen.*

Finally they tell him that the Three Divine Persons are to themselves their own sufficient praise, and the only praise worthy of their infinite goodness ; then prostrating himself on the ground, with his face in the dust, in the excess of his joy the poor Idiot cries out : *Amen*, *Amen*, and a third time *Amen*, *Amen* eternally!

ELEVATION VII

The "Our Father" of a Little Child

OUR *Father who art in heaven.*

Father of Paradise: Father of all little children, we love Thee very, very much. Thou smilest down upon us from heaven. Thou callest to us. Thou holdest out Thy arms to us. Thou wouldest take us *on Thy knee* and embrace us, *pressing us to Thy heart;* Thou wishest us to love Thee in return. Jesus said, *Suffer little children to come unto me*, and He blessed them and kissed them and caressed them.

He also said that *the Kingdom of heaven belonged to the little ones.* Does it not also belong to grown-up people? I asked my mother that because she is grown-up, and I want her to come to heaven too, and she said that grown-up people must make themselves just like little children before

they will be allowed into the beautiful big place which is Heaven. I asked her how this could be done? She said by humility, gentleness, meekness and love—simple, tender love—but I did not understand what she meant.

Hallowed be thy name.

Oh! great God and dear Father, how can this be? There are wicked people who use Thy name in mockery or when they are angry. I have heard them do it. I have even heard some of my little companions swear when they want to pretend to be like grown-up men. My mother says I should pity them because they are imitating the bad habits of their parents or their big brothers. She has taught me, when I hear them swear, to say to myself, *Lord forgive them: they know not what they do*, and *Hallowed be Thy name.* And then I make a tiny little sign of the Cross on my heart and I feel better.

Thy Kingdom come.

I wish I could see Thee on Thy throne, with Thy crown upon Thy head, shining

brighter than the sun, Thy royal mantle as blue as the sky and covered with twinkling stars and edged with golden fringe.

In the big picture book where father wrote the days I and my brothers and sisters were born and when we were baptized, there is a picture of Thee with a beautiful white beard flowing down to Thy waist. And there are angels all around Thee, millions and millions of beautiful angels, with great white wings, ready to fly away any minute, if Thou tellest them to come down to earth to take care of little children like me, from the minute they are born.

And there is also a crowd of Saints before Thy throne who are singing and playing trumpets and cymbals and triangles and even drums. How lovely it must all be! I wish I was there already.

From the foot of Thy throne the river of life gushes out in great waves, *the sight and sound of which fill the inhabitants of Heaven with joy*. The holy Innocents of Heaven play upon the banks of this stream amongst the trees, flowers and delicious fruits of all kinds. How I wish I had

fruit like that and could play up there, with the holy Innocents! Lovely birds fly about them, birds of every colour and kind ; they fly round their heads, perch on their shoulders and let themselves be caught and caressed.

If so it is in Thy Heaven, oh! dear Father God, *Thy Kingdom come!*

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That is why Thou leavest us on earth for a while, that we may do Thy holy will on earth and thus earn the reward of everlasting life. Oh! I want to do Thy will. I want to do whatever Thou wishest. I want to want nothing else but whatever Thou wishest. *My God, Thy will be done!*

When pious, gentle, sweet-tempered Abel saw his wicked brother Cain was going to kill him, no doubt he said: *My God, Thy will be done!* When his father Abraham tied him to a heap of faggots and was going to kill him with a big knife, dear little Isaac must have said: *My God, Thy will be done!* I wonder if I would

have had so much courage if it had been me instead of him. Yes, I would have had it too, because the good God would have given me grace. Little Samuel woke up three times in the night and went to the High Priest twice saying: *Here I am, because you called me.* It was only the third time that he said: *Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth.*

But the sweetest thing of all was when little Jesus came into the world and said: *Father, behold I come to do Thy will. I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart.* And all His life long He kept repeating these words. Even during His terrible Passion and when He was hanging and dying on the Cross He said: *It is finished;* my God, my Father, *I have done Thy will; into Thy hands I commend my spirit*; and bowing down His head, He died.

I learned all this at the Catechism class, and Father Hurley gave me a nice picture, because I repeated it all word for word. And since then I love to say again and again: *My God, Thy will be done.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

Us means all the little children in the world. They are all my brothers, especially the very poor ones in the big towns, the little Chinese children that I hear about through the Society of the Holy Childhood, all the little savages in the backwoods of America, all the little negroes, all the little boys and girls in India and Japan and everywhere. We are all brothers and sisters, since dear Jesus died for us all. They are all Thy very own little children, dear Father, God of Heaven, and Thou wishest me to pray for them, to ask things for them, as I ask for myself.

Our daily bread. The bread we ask for is what we want for our poor little bodies, because it hurts to be hungry and have nothing to eat; but, dear Heavenly Father, we ask most of all for *the bread from heaven, the Living Bread*, the Holy Sacrament, in which we find dear Jesus, Thy Son and our Saviour. He has said: *The bread that I will give is my flesh. Take and eat, this is my Body. Suffer little children to come unto me.* And our own Pope, good Pius the Tenth, said Holy

Communion is for little children just as much as for grown-up people, and they may have It, even every day if they love God enough for that. So I go to the altar with the grown-up people, as reverent as I can be, with my hands joined thus, and I think sometimes when the priest has to bend right down to give me the Sacred Host, he smiles oh! so sweetly.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.

Forgive me, dear Jesus and dear Heavenly Father, forgive all my sins, all my disobediences, all the untruths I have told; all my nasty, spiteful acts, my laziness, my greediness, my ill temper, my jealousy; because I am jealous and proud, I know. Dear God, I have committed so many sins, I am such a little fellow and yet such a big sinner. But I want to do better now. And in order that Thou mayest forgive me, oh! dear God, I want to forgive everyone, my brothers and sisters and companions: I want to forgive anything they may have done to hurt me. If we get cross I want to be the first to be sorry, I want

to make it up with them for love of little Jesus.

And lead us not into temptation.

Temptation, oh yes, I know what it is. The horrid black devil comes from hell and wanders round us, trying to make us lose our souls, so that he may carry them away with him to hell. He would like to make my soul all black and ugly and rotten as he is himself, and then he could say to God: "You see this soul belongs to me, so let me carry it off."

But I won't be carried off. I don't want to be; and when I think of this horrible, accursed wretch I take holy water and I make the sign of the Cross and I say: "Jesus, Mary, my good angel, all the dear Saints of Paradise, come quickly and help me, I don't want to listen to what this horrid wretch is saying." And then I say my prayers till he sees he cannot get hold of me, and so he goes away quite ashamed of himself, and I am so glad.

Deliver us from evil.

Deliver us from toothache, and head-

ache and stiff necks. Deliver father and mother from whatever makes them anxious and unhappy as I have seen them sometimes. They are so good and they love each other and us so much.

There are nine of us. Mamie is just five and Winnie is only three. I am much bigger than they are: I am seven. There was Albert also, only he went back to heaven when he was a dear little tiny baby, and we were so sad about it. Then there are five big ones, bigger than I am. The eldest of all is Annie. She wants to be a Sister of Charity, to take care of poor sick people in hospital. Her best friend, Frances, who lives in the big house across the street, and is so bright and wears jewels and things because her parents have heaps and heaps of money, says she wants to become a Carmelite nun. I am very fond of her and she is of me. She teaches me nice, little, short prayers like this: "My Jesus, I give Thee my heart." Once she is a Carmelite we shall only be able to see her through a grating. She says she will be in one of the birdcages of the good God. Won't it be sweet to see her there?

Father calls me his little "Number Six." He says if we drew lots when I grow up to be twenty-one, I should have to be a sailor with that number ; I don't quite understand what he means. Besides, I hope I shall be able to be a priest like Leo, my big brother, who serves Mass in a nice white cotta, and learns Latin.

He has taught me how to say Mass in a chasuble made of paper, and to sing *Dominus vobiscum*. He says I must never laugh when I am doing this, but sometimes I feel so happy that I really can't help it. Leo says when he is a priest he is going far, far away to the Foreign Missions, and I am going with him. Between Leo and me there are the twins, Tommy and Cecily, nine years old, and they look very much like one another, and I think they love one another a tiny bit more than they love me, but I am not jealous. They are so good!

Mother says she is sure God will send us another little brother or sister soon to take Albert's place : I think she got a letter to say so. But isn't it a great pity that she is ill? She won't be able to welcome him

or her with us all. Father says she is very brave, and he calls her his gold-mine. We are very lucky to have such good, kind parents. Mother is like Our Lady, who loved the Infant Jesus so much. I call her "Little mother," and I call the blessed Virgin Mary "Good mother."

At the end of the Our Father, like any other prayer, one says: *Amen*. My big brother taught me that it is a Latin word, and it means, Be it so. *Amen*, oh my God, my Heavenly Father, and I wish I could embrace Thee with all my heart, just as I kiss my mother when I have finished talking to her. Then she kisses me back over and over again and I am sure You do the same, oh! dear Heavenly Father. So I say *Amen*, and again *Amen*, and I go on saying it all the time until I can go and see Thee in Heaven, and repeat *Amen* for ever and ever with all the Blessed Angels and Saints.

ELEVATION VIII

Against Contradiction to the Lord's Prayer

THERE are very many people, not only hardened sinners, but others who think themselves good and holy, who in their hearts contradict the words of the Lord's Prayer, whose lives are lived in direct opposition to its precepts. Their sentiments are in reality something like the following.

Our Father who art in heaven.

I never give Thee nor Thy beautiful heavenly Kingdom a thought. I never entertain even the shadow of a wish for it nor the least affection for Thee. As far as I am concerned it is just as though Thou didst not exist. Or if I give Thee a thought, I think of Thee not as the most tender of fathers, but as a hard, unreason-

able master, as a tyrant whose orders it is wiser to evade as much as possible.

Hallowed be thy name.

This is not in the least what I desire. I wish to hear my own name on every lip. I want to be praised as a man beyond compare, as wise and clever and wonderful. I only think and speak of myself. I am the centre of my own existence, and all my world revolves around that self. As the Pharisee in the Gospel: *I am not like the rest of men.*

How often have I compared myself favourably with others and said: "I am not like So-and-so," or "It is easy to see that you do not realize whom you have to do with," or "I will show them who I am." I, I, always I, written in the largest letter possible.

The schoolboy cuts his name on the wainscotting or the furniture of his class-room. The idler in the country, instead of admiring the beauties of nature around him, spends hours in carving his name or initials upon the bark of a huge forest tree. But it occurs to neither of them to

take as much trouble to write their names in the Book of Life.

Thy Kingdom come.

No, not Thy Kingdom, O my God, but mine. The cry of many people to-day is for no more Kings. It would be far more true to say that everyone wishes to be King ; and not a nominal or even a Parliamentary one, but a real, powerful, absolute ruler. One's own sole and irresponsible master, of course, marshalling and using the little world of one's own faculties without any reference to the commandments of God. Ruler also over those around, on whom one may impose all one's caprices and by whom, whether they wish it or not, one expects to be paid homage. Ruler over as many people as one can possibly lay hold of, whether employed in one's service, or toiling in a shop or factory, or engaged in any undertaking, great or small, on which the tax of sweat or brain or money or even blood can be levied ; for that is how labour of the present day is still carried out in many countries, although here in England, legislation

and trades unions have freed the working man from a good deal of such tyranny; at the same time giving him his chance to show himself a tyrant in turn.

What King reigns more absolutely than the man who has the power and is not impeded by scruples of conscience? It makes no difference whether he be a great manufacturer, a captain of trade, the proprietor of ships or coal mines or large landed estates, or a contractor on a large scale, or whether he be only a small householder, a head clerk, a non-commissioned officer: they all mean to rule and to reign supreme and make their power felt by those under them and to be unquestioningly obeyed. There are no greater tyrants, no more absolute despots than certain husbands to their wives and children, though at times "lovely woman" can grasp the sceptre of domination and wield it with no light hand, and render her yoke terribly galling.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Oh! no, my God, not so: Thou mayest do as Thou likest in heaven, let Thy will

be done there, but leave the earth to us. Our will, the will of us men, be done on earth, or rather my will be done ; my will and not Thine. When Jesus was in His agony in the Garden of Olives His prayer was: *Father, thy will not mine be done.* I do not pray thus. Whatever happens, my will be done. Everyone must give in to me, things must bend to my will, I must have what I want. I will not be contradicted, I will not put up with opposition, My will, my will must be done at all costs.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Lord, give me much more than mere bread. I do not mind what others have or what they need. It does not matter to me if they have nothing so long as I have what I want, in fact I would rather they were in need, because then my superiority over them would be unmistakable.

Yes, Lord, give me much, much more. Whatever Thou mayest give I shall never have enough. I may say at times: If only I had this or that I should not ask for more. But when I do get it, I still find there is something wanting.

Lord, give me all I need to satisfy my desires, my passions, my whims. Give me all good things of this world and enable me to enjoy them to the full. If I may have all the joys of this world, I am in no hurry for my share of Paradise. Death must come, I am sorry to say, it is inevitable, inexorable ; so I ask for the pleasures of this life and for Heaven afterwards.

Fool! what you ask is impossible. You must exercise moderation in this world or you will be lost for all eternity. Remember *Dives*.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Oh! we are quite willing to be forgiven, but not as we forgive others, for that would mean our own condemnation. Have pity on me, my God, but do not make it a condition that I should have pity on others.

Or else one says: Yes, I am quite willing to forgive, but not to forgive everything. There are some people, some kinds of injuries, either real or imaginary, that I can never forgive. No, never. I like to

keep my grievances hidden away in my heart, to brood over them and to cherish schemes of revenge for them.

Lead us not into temptation.

Temptations: after all, it does not matter so very much if one fall now and then; it is not a matter of such great importance to be delivered from them. Indeed, there are some temptations that one wishes for, that one puts oneself in the way of; that one welcomes warmly, joyfully, almost with enthusiasm. But what about the sin that ensues? Well, if one can go to confession soon after, it is all right, isn't it? One falls, one goes to confession. One falls again, and again one seeks absolution, and so it goes on. There is no reason why it should not. Temptation is so pleasing, so attractive, so well loved, that one does not stop to look upon the sin that follows as an offence against God.

It is merely an unpleasant burden that one must try and get rid of as quickly as possible by a confession without contrition, with nothing more than attrition, and in which one may question the firmness of

the purpose of amendment. But he who loves temptation takes care not to enter into such details as these. He has been to confession and, to him, that ought to be enough.

Deliver us from evil.

What this crowning petition in the Lord's prayer really means is: After having forgiven our past sins and provided against our relapse into them, Lord deliver us from their baneful consequences, especially from the most horrid of all, the power of the devil, from his wiles and from everlasting damnation. But that is not the sense in which the so-called Christian takes it.

He thinks of nothing but the present: he never looks forward into eternity, to the formidable prospect of hell. His horizon is bounded by the present life. The evils from which he asks to be delivered are, above all, physical evils, bodily sufferings, privations, fatigues, in fact everything that is most precious to the eyes of faith. He does not wish for suffering at any price, though he does everything likely to pro-

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duce it, committing all kinds of excesses, and if illness is the result he rails against it, with blasphemy, in despair.

This is the interpretation of the Our Father as set forth in the life and works of the bad Christian.

Lord Jesus Christ, my God and my Saviour, I am horrified at the sentiments I have just heard expressed ; oh! deliver me from the evil of ever contradicting the beautiful prayer Thou hast brought us from Heaven. Never let me be in opposition to it, either in deed or in word or even in the secret recesses of my heart. Amen.

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